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MRS. THORNE'S GUESTS

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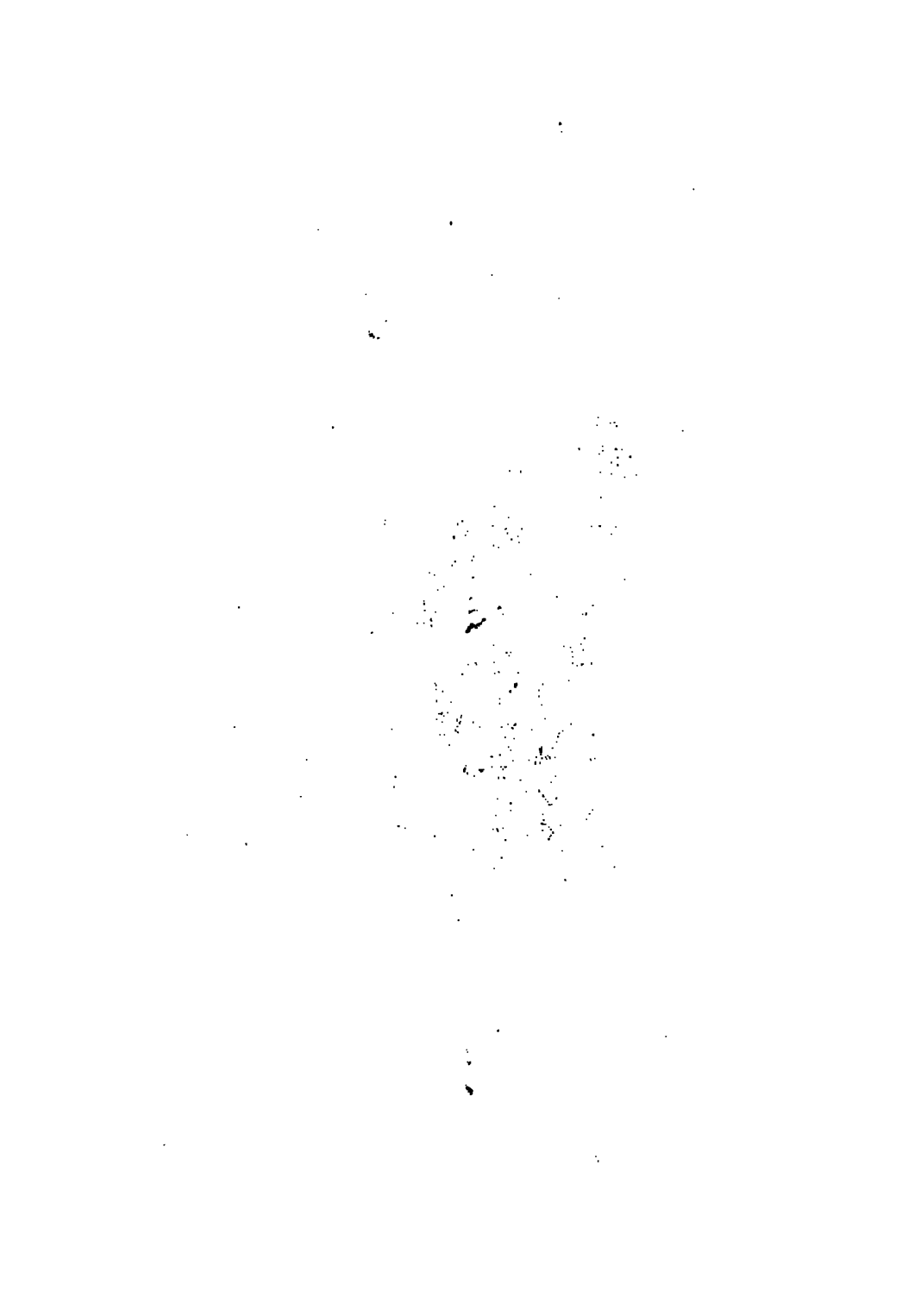

MRS. THORNE'S GUESTS;

OR,

Salt, With Savour and Without.

BY

ARCHIE FELL,

AUTHOR OF "GOLD AND GILT," "EARTHEN VESSELS," ETC.

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TO THE DEAR SISTER,

WHOSE AID AND SYMPATHY ARE EVER INVALUABLE TO ME,

THIS VOLUME

IS AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED BY

ARCHIE FELL.

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MRS. THORNE'S GUESTS.

CHAPTER I.

THE GUESTS INTRODUCED.

"The voice of Him who knoweth well
This life of mortal birth,
How fresh, and fair, and beautiful,
May be this lower earth.
The latest bird of evening heard
Through gloom of forest trees,
And distant bells on forest hills, —
Lov'st thou Me more than these?"

"CONFESS now, Uncle Paul, that we owe all this nice arrangement to you," said Kate Fenno, seating herself upon one of the thread-bare sofas in the saloon of R—— station.

He was an old, white-haired gentleman to whom this was addressed. Among business men he was known as the wealthy and rather eccentric Mr. Jennings, but to all who came within the range of his kindly sympathy and affection, he was "Uncle Paul;" and as Mrs. Jennings used often to say, — "Never was

"What a gloomy life!"

"Aunt Penroy says it is dreadfully selfish," remarked Kate, "a waste of golden means and opportunities, in her opinion."

"Not exactly of means," said Uncle Paul, "for her purse is always open to any appeal of suffering. But a nervous prostration, together with remorse for a thoughtless past, makes her shrink from intercourse with the world. Bitter as the lesson was, her heart has learned but half the truth of God's rich promises; and seeing only her own weakness, she keeps herself *out* of the world, lest she should again become *of* it. I wanted to interest her once more in other than the pecuniary needs of her fellow-beings; and this plan, for which you give me so much credit, Kitty, was, I assure you, intended for the benefit of no young ladies enjoying as comfortable homes as ourselves. I meant to bring to Mrs. Thorne's heart and home some of those whose poverty-stricken lives——"

"Ah! ha! and so it was Mrs. T.'s good taste that substituted my queenly Janet and simple

me, in lieu of the forlorn wretches you have such a penchant for, Uncle Paul. I declare I begin to admire her already. You must have forgotten how distracted I am at home with Aunt Penroy's quiddities, and mamma's morning headaches; and how much Nettie has longed to take lessons in painting of Monsieur Peren. But never mind, since Mrs. Thorne *did* remember that her lamented consort was cousin to mamma, and an early friend of Nettie's papa. And the other four misses, coming in the next train, — do tell us about them."

"Percy Howe, a veritable niece of mine, comes from a pleasant farmhouse about thirty miles away; while her friend, Louise Fay, became known to Mrs. Thorne through her brother Frank, who spent a summer vacation in their vicinity once upon a time. Then our poor, deformed Miss Fielding ——"

"Oh! Uncle Paul, why did you bring her here?" interrupted Kate. "I can never be reconciled to it in the world, that dear, noble cousin Leonard must be tied to her for life.

If only they had not been engaged, — or she had never met with that dreadful fall, — or, — well, I would rather have died, as every body expected she would, than to be as she is; and to think of Leonard's giving up his profession, and taking a clerkship, here in R——, just to provide a home for her sooner. They say she frets the whole time. Why, Uncle Paul, won't it be dreadfully mortifying to Len to have her here?"

"Not as once it would, my dear Kate," said the old man, a tear glistening in his eye.

"Because he has become a Christian?" asked Kate, after a little silence.

"Yes, dear. The cross God had laid upon him in his youth is no longer galling; he has found grace sufficient."

"But this religion will make him gloomier than ever, I suppose," she rejoined, "and he always was as glum as an iceberg, unless you could get on the sunny side of him."

"But if this religion should have made *every* side sunny, you would think it worth possessing, wouldn't you?"

"I don't want to think any thing about it, that's a dear Uncle Paul; and there comes the gentleman in question."

Had any one else compared her cousin Leonard Houston to an iceberg, Kate would have been indignant, for his natural hauteur of manner was her especial admiration. True, since the shadowing of his bright prospects by an all-wise but mysterious Providence, it had given place to a morose, almost sullen aspect, covered with so thin a mask of cheerfulness that hardly any one, much less his friends, could doubt the weight of the burden he carried. But "since he had fallen in with this religion," Kate had not seen him, and now, as she met him in her lively way, and chatted on about matters in general, she was half-unconsciously watching him, with an unwilling impression that his quiet, happy demeanor did not seem put on, as it used to do. But she only talked more animatedly of her gay anticipations for the winter; the concerts, operas, and the like, with the "cousinly coterie" that was to fill up all vacancies; for wasn't

Charley Stone, Leonard's chum, a cousin of that Percy Howe? and wasn't Frank Knowlton, Mrs. Thorne's brother, cousin *in futuro* to Janet? one could tell by her blushes — and shouldn't she always believe in special providences after this? and wasn't that the train? whereupon Uncle Paul and Leonard hastened out upon the platform, and Kate proceeded to adjust her hat before the small mirror, saying emphatically, "I shall be glad when all the getting introduced is over, and we are fairly domiciled. I wonder ——"

"Well," laughed Miss Dunslep, "for you to wonder is nothing new."

"But I *do* wonder what Leonard Houston wanted of religion. I always thought him perfection."

"And he probably thinks himself so," was Miss Dunslep's sarcastic reply.

"No, for he never was proud, — not in the common way, at least; but just as good and noble as need be. I don't see why he wanted to be any better. And then I'd laid so many fine plans with him for a gallant, — he is so grand-looking, you know. Isn't it funny, Net-

tie, how much of this world's pleasure is in showing off? But now this Miss Fielding will spoil half of it; and if his new-found goodness does the rest, good-bye to all my fine times. I declare, I'm getting cross, and

'There's no sunlight a shadow can not dim.'"

Singing the last words, she waltzed to the accompaniment of her own voice the length of the spacious saloon, and peered curiously out into the noisy, bustling crowd, only to dart back in mimic affright, as it came rolling its waves of confusion into the hitherto quiet room.

Uncle Paul had a lady on each arm. The one of medium size, light-haired and gray-eyed, he introduced as Miss Louise Fay; the other, dark-complexioned, tall, and with that square-shouldered, robust form, certain to develop its awkward points in proportion with the effort to hide them, answered to the name of Percy Howe. Leonard followed more slowly with Miss Fielding, who chanced to pause, during the introductions, directly beside Miss Dunslep.

"My queenly Janet," was Kate's favorite epithet for her friend; and perhaps no other adjective could better describe the well-poised form, the lustrous eye, the self-possessed manner, of Janet Dunslep. Her dress, too, always presented such a perfect harmony of color, that one never thought of it but in connection with herself, — to admire the *tout ensemble.*

But poor Miss Fielding! The blue flowers in her felt hat disagreeably hightened the sallow complexion, and her attempts to smile did not relieve the unhappy expression of her mouth. The chilly air had reddened the scar on her cheek, and the fashion of her light-blue habit did not, in the least, conceal the sad curvature of the spine and distorted shoulder. Was every one noting the marked contrast between the two, that such a sudden silence ensued, after the introductions were concluded?

It was a happy relief when Charlie Stone came rushing in, flushed and panting, to "catch a glimpse of Cousin Percy;" and then there was such a development of near and distant relationship, setting every tongue into so

rapid motion, and eliciting such merry peals of laughter, that the groups of bystanders laughed in very sympathy.

"Does five constitute your half-dozen, Uncle Paul?" asked Kate, at length.

"Bless me! I had quite forgotten Miss Seroy," and Uncle Paul put on his glasses for a closer scrutiny of the card in his hand. "Miss — Madeline — Seroy; that must be the one just coming towards us."

Five pairs of inquisitive eyes were immediately directed upon the young lady crossing the room, and, before she reached them, had satisfied their owners that Miss Seroy's hair was an unmistakable red,— not auburn even,— and arranged in most elaborate braids and curls around a face of that fair complexion which seems, sometimes, an effort of nature to make amends for the careless mistake of first dipping her brush into high colors. She was dressed in the extreme of fashion, and her supercilious manner of addressing Uncle Paul did not make a very favorable impression upon her future companions. The arrival of the

carriage, however, put an end to all further comments, and very shortly the six young ladies were set down before the brown stone front of Mrs. Thorne's handsome residence. There was little time for curious glances around, for Mrs. Doughty, the housekeeper, immediately appeared to conduct them to their rooms; and the information, volunteered by Jefferson, the colored waiter, who brought up their trunks, that "dinner was jes' mos' ready," allowed only a very hurried toilet.

Dinner was rather a quiet affair. The forbidding expression of Mrs. Doughty's face did not promote sociability, and each admired in silence the heavy family plate, the elegant sideboard, the paintings of fish, flesh, and fowl, and the tempting fruit-pieces, adorning each panel of the antique wainscoting.

The afternoon, too, dragged itself rather slowly away; after they had finished inspecting the drawing-rooms, library, conservatory, and Janet's "studio,"—a large room upon the third floor, with windows looking south and west, over which Kate went into ecstasies, quite

as much as at the opposite room, fitted up with croquet, and various other indoor amusements. Nothing seemed wanting that could gratify either mental or physical desires, and yet, with the fall of twilight, something very like homesickness sobered each young face, hardly to be wondered at, considering their strange and somewhat anomalous position, as guests without a hostess. Fatigue would have furnished an excuse for an early separation after tea, had not Uncle Paul dropped in just for a moment, to see if the young ladies were feeling at home; and the "moment" lengthened into hours, while the gay group around the genial old man laughed at his jokes, replied to his sallies, and wondered over his inexhaustible supply of anecdotes.

"And now, my dear girls," he said at length, rising to go, while a look of seriousness came into his mild blue eye, "will you grant an old man a favor? Our heavenly Father has not placed us here merely to enjoy ourselves. We are accountable to him for every day he gives us. While you are here, will you,

at night, compare each day's experience with the words written on these cards," — putting one into the hand of each, — "and again, in the morning, will you read them over as a message to you from God's Word? Do not show them to each other till you separate in the spring. Good-night."

Taking his hat from Jefferson, he had reached the door, when Percy followed to whisper in his ear, — "I wrote you, didn't I, that Louise is one of your *good* kind. Have you forgotten?"

He turned back to where Louise was standing. "I was too glad to find Miss Fay already one of Christ's followers easily to forget it," he said, taking her hand affectionately. "You will find my Christian greeting on your card; but," and he glanced at the gay group just re-entering the parlor, "I fear they are yet astray. Remember, '*Salt is good.*'"

Her quick glance told him the brief quotation was understood, but not how deeply it sank into her heart, coupled with the unuttered words, "but if the salt have lost his savor, it is henceforth good for nothing."

In her own room she sat down to read Uncle Paul's "Christian greeting." It was, "For though we walk in the flesh, we do not walk after the flesh," for "the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."

"It almost seems as if he knew what dear mother and I were talking of last night," she thought to herself; tears filling her eyes as the dear home sitting-room came vividly to mind, with "mother's chair" in the corner and the empty cricket beside it. Was it only last night she sat there? it seemed so long ago, feeling the pressure of toil-hardened hands upon her brow, as in answer to her question, "How shall I be *in* the world and not be come *of* it?" the Christian mother had said, "Only by living near to Him who prayed that thus his followers might be kept, my child."

"What are you thinking about?" said Percy, looking up from her unpacking. "Oh, Uncle Paul's card. Dear me! what did I do with mine? I wish it was a codicil to his will

in my favor. I was dreadfully mortified at having only one trunk, when the black man tugged up three for Miss Seroy. Isn't that an elegant marble slab on that dressing-table? Oh, here it is," — and she lifted the little card from her bureau, running her eye admiringly over the various useful and ornamental toilet trifles, among which it had fallen. But the written message — read at last — brought a troubled expression to her face. Louise looked up, wondering at the sudden silence, when Percy tossed the card into her writing-desk and turned the key with an impatient snap, saying fretfully, "Uncle Paul is so full of oughts and oughtn'ts! While I am *in* the world, I do wish he'd let me be a little *like* it. Because he can be religious, without injuring his popularity, it doesn't follow that every body need take up staff and wallet, and budge after."

By and by, however, she came and sat down on the floor beside Louise, her long black hair hanging over her shoulders, and said, "I wish you would talk to me, Lou."

"What about, Percy?"

"As you used to, when you wanted me to become a Christian."

"But I hope you are one, dear Percy. Haven't you felt so all this summer?"

"Not one of your kind, Lou. I try to be a Christian, because mother wants me to, and because I know I ought. But, Lou, these things, this wealth, the world of fashion and society we shall see here, — I love them; and if I am a Christian, I must give them all up, mustn't I? If I was only like you, so contented, even in our humdrum little village, as if you had never a longing for what you can't have."

"How little you know of my heart, Percy. I was saying almost the very words you used, about the world, to mother last night; and asking her if I could really be striving after an incorruptible crown while I was longing so much for earthly things."

"What did she say?" asked Percy, eagerly. "Mother always says it is my wicked heart, and she knows I'll be lost."

"She said God meant we should serve him just where he places us in the world; and that with his help we can reconcile in our life what sometimes we can not in understanding."

"But about loving the world, and Christ, too?"

"She said I must settle it in my own mind, as before God, which I loved most. If the world was first, then were we outside the fold; for Christ's question was, 'Lovest thou me *more* than these?'"

Percy turned away with a little sigh. "I believe if I was rich I could do right more easily. Now I'm in such a fidget for fear my dress will be out of style, or something; and I don't mean these city misses shall mistrust but what I have used silver forks ever since I learned to keep my fingers out of the sugar-bowl."

Louise laughed, but said nothing.

"Do you suppose Frank Knowlton will remember us, now he has traveled in Europe, and inherited half a million?" asked Percy, abruptly.

Louise was busy over her boot-lacing, and only said, "Perhaps so."

"What a pleasant summer that was!" continued Percy, musingly. "It was the summer you became a Christian, I remember; and we all went to the prayer-meetings. I'm afraid Mr. Knowlton hasn't much relish for such things now."

Louise made no reply, and so the conversation ended.

CHAPTER II.

GETTING ACQUAINTED.

"Pray that God may prosper ever each endeavor,
When thine aim is good and true.
But that he may ever thwart thee, and convert thee,
When thou evil wouldst pursue."

PERCY awoke Louise the next morning as soon as the first flush of daylight crept through their closed shutters.

"We must keep on the right side of the 'powers that be,'" she said, "and I know that Mrs. Doughty is as methodical as a clock-pendulum. I could see it in the wink of her eye."

"I was just having such a queer dream," said Louise. "I could see myself walking through a mountain defile, unable to find my way out, when all at once Uncle Paul's card became a flaming torch and was leading me right toward the summit, when you spoke."

"Now do forget some of your strange no-

tions, Lou," returned Percy. "It will do no harm to appear as near like the others as we can."

"In whatsoever things are right, we may follow them, Percy; but it almost frightens me, — the new exciting life we are to lead this winter."

"That is what it doesn't me," said Percy. "It is just what I always wanted, and I mean to make the most of it, I assure you."

Reader, have we shown you clearly the aim of these two hearts? Then pass we next to the breakfast-table, where there was no lack of conversation, despite the frown on Mrs. Doughty's eyebrows because Miss Seroy had not yet risen. At last Louise observed that Miss Fielding had eaten nothing, and inquired if she had no appetite.

"I never eat fish," was the laconic reply.

"Mercy on us!" exclaimed Mrs. Doughty. "Why couldn't you have said so before? There is plenty of steak in the house;" and she touched the bell.

"It is not of the least consequence; and I

am sure I could not eat a mouthful now," said Miss Fielding, in an aggrieved tone.

The housekeeper ordered some broiled, however, and insisted on Miss Fielding's waiting till it was brought up. The others followed Kate to the library, "to talk," said that young lady, carefully closing the door, "for my tongue has been in durance vile the livelong night, thanks to Janet's politeness in taking Miss Fielding for a room-mate, and leaving me to the tender mercies of Miss Hair'm-Scare'm. My head is crammed full of honorable titles, borne by her great aunts and uncles, to say nothing of the bank-stock and cash in their pockets, — all free gratis, without my asking a single question. She can trace her ancestry back to — to — let me see, not before the flood, because Noah was a carpenter; but 'twas to Jezebel, I guess, for she tired her head and looked out of the window, — so Aunt Penroy says; — and Miss Auburn-hair tired *her* head and looked into the mirror. Why, actually, girls, I counted fifty-three curl-papers, and I went twice over them; and she is the selfishest ——"

"We must not have this, Kittie, if we are to pass a pleasant winter together," interrupted Janet Dunslep; "there must be no slandering behind one's back."

"Well, I hadn't but just begun to slander," retorted Kate, "as far as Miss Seroy was concerned. I only gave you an extract from her family history, and a fact in craniology, as to how much friction is allowable between paper and fire without combustion. Miss Fay, are you going to read all those books through?"

"Not in three months," was the reply, as a volume of British Poets went back to its place, "but as large a share of them as possible."

"So improvement and progress are your hobby, as well as Janet's? Oh! do you know Miss Seroy came to town to get a finishing polish on her extraordinary musical abilities? and then she 'dotes on going upon the stage.' Only think, a Jenny Lind right among us! Don't scowl, Nettie, and I'll tell you what I picked up in my voyage of discovery this morning. Down in the kitchen there's Joanna the cook, and Margaret the chambermaid.

Jefferson you have seen, and Samp, the errand-boy, is only a smaller edition of the same material. There's the nicest old man in the conservatory; and oh! I caught a glimpse of little Lawrence Thorne; and there is a portrait of the judge in the hall ——"

"Why, Kate Fenno, at what time did you get up?"

"Oh, I took things systematically, you see; and if you and Miss Fay are going to dive at once into those histories of cities and people somewhere underground, of course you won't find time for any exploration of modern dwelling houses."

"We will take you for a guide, when we do, Miss Fenno," said Louise.

"I don't like to be missed,— pun old as the hills; but 'call me pet names,' if you please. I may say Louise and Percy, mayn't I?"

"Kittie is too indolent to use long names," said Janet, laughing.

"My dear Nettie, I beg you not to talk scandal. To be sure, I did intend to cultivate my love of ease this winter, but I find that ter-

ritory already preempted. That Miss Seroy — oh, there you are," she continued, without a sign of embarrassment as the lady in question came in. "I was just speaking of you. I have found the music-room. It is away beyond the side hall, with arched ceiling, and has an organ, piano, harp and guitar."

"Wretchedly out of tune, I suppose," was the affected reply. "Of course nobody has played on them for years."

"You forget Mrs. Thorne's brother. Mrs. Doughty says he uses them all a great deal; but you had better come and see for yourself."

Percy followed them to the music-room, but Janet and Louise remained to a quiet enjoyment of the books lining three sides of the pleasant library, till the latter excused herself to write a letter home. On the stairs she met little Lawrence, — a peculiar-looking child, with a broad, high forehead, overshadowing two bright blue eyes, and shaded in turn by a wreath of curls almost too light to be called golden. He held up his mouth so winningly for a kiss, that she could not forbear sitting

down with him by the large hall window; — an arrangement which seemed to meet his wishes exactly.

"I'm glad mamma let you all come," he began.

"So are we; but what makes you glad?"

"Oh, I am so tired of every thing there is here; I've seen it so much, and I've been wishing for some nice times so long."

"The poor little boys, who have no nice clothes or playthings, would think you had a great many nice times, wouldn't they?"

"Oh, yes, my Big'un is one of them, and he says my things are 'bully;' but I don't know what that means, and mamma says it isn't a nice word: but he's a nice boy, my Big'un is, and he lives in a cellar. Isn't it too bad? and he tells me all about poor lame Jamie, who lives up-stairs, but it's all cold and dark, and he can't run about any; so my Big'un says he has nicer times than Jamie. Why it's just like a ladder, isn't it? My Big'un is happier than Jamie; I am happier than my Big'un; and you are happier than mamma and me."

"What makes you think that?"

"Because you don't have to stay in the house all the time, and I guess God hasn't taken away your papa, and made your mamma cry all the time; but the angels are happier than you, you know; so the ladder goes way up to heaven, where my papa is. I wish God would tip it up, and let Jamie into heaven, and my papa down here. Wouldn't it be nice?"

"Do you know who lets us into heaven, darling?"

"Yes, it's Jesus. Nursey told me and mamma. He died, so we needn't, and that is what makes me love God; but I can't help wondering why he don't make every body have good times down here. Once I told my Big'un how God loved us, to let his own Son die, so he needn't have to punish us; and he said if God loved us, why didn't he make Jamie get well, and give every body enough to eat; and I can't fix it, exactly."

"I wonder if mother ever punishes her little boy."

The head hung down a moment, and then the honest little spirit looked out of the uplifted eyes, as he replied, "Sometimes she does, when I get angry and say naughty things to her, that I'm so sorry for afterwards. Mrs. Doughty says that is papa's pride and will, and my mamma ought not to crush it and make me like common folks; but mother says I'll thank her some day, if it don't seem so when I am shut up in her little closet, or eating dry bread for supper 'cause I'm naughty."

"Yes, dear, and so perhaps people now in heaven have thanked God for taking away their good times down here, to make them better. And when Lawrence is sick, what does mother do?"

"Oh, she gives me bitter, black medicine, and I don't love it; but she knows a great deal more than I, you know; so always when she gets her little wine-glass of stuff, and the spoonful of nice jelly, I say to myself, 'mamma knows best,' and down it goes."

Louise gave the little fellow an involuntary hug, and he crept up into her lap, saying, "I

guess I love you, but what did you hug me for?"

"I was thinking," she said, "that just so God's children ought to say, when he sends them sorrow and tears, 'God knows best.' Can you understand that, little pet?"

"Not quite, I guess," he answered, shaking his head slowly to and fro, "unless God doctors our souls to make them get well; but are our souls sick?"

"Yes, dear, with sin, you know, as a good prophet said once, who knew that by and by Jesus was coming to save us from our sins, 'The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint; from the sole of the foot even unto the head, there is no soundness in it, but wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores.' You know after Christ came, God could forgive us our sins, and permit us to come to heaven, but these sick souls of ours, so full of evil, need to be fitted for that abode, into which nothing unclean can enter."

"I guess I see," said the child; "sometimes God punishes us a little, so we won't do things

to make to make us badder, and sometimes doctors us to make us get better. I wonder which he is doing to us, for mamma don't say 'God knows best,' but she says, 'God does it.' I think he ought to give Mrs. Doughty a proper dose, for she talks dreadfully about him, because he don't treat every body alike; but she don't like common folks a bit, and one day I told her perhaps she was one of God's common folks, and she slammed the door awfully. I guess he wants to make my Big'un stop lying and swearing so. Isn't it funny!" he added, "a little while ago I was wishing God wouldn't do so, and now I wish he'd doctor them more."

"Who is Big'un?" asked Louise.

"Oh, don't you know my Big'un? I shouldn't wonder if he was in the kitchen now. Let's go and see;" and he pulled her hastily down the stairs.

Close by Joanna's warm fire, and partaking of a bowl of bread and milk with evident relish, sat 'my Big'un,' ragged and dirty, his uncombed hair surmounted with a brimless

straw hat, and red patches of his naked feet protruding through his worn-out shoes.

"You haven't gone, have you?" said Lawrence. "And I want you to tell Jamie that God is making him well, all the time he hurts so, — his soul, I mean, — and he'll know it after he dies."

"Ho! I guess so," said Big'un. "That's a funny time to get well."

"But his soul, I mean," repeated Lawrence, earnestly. "And you are so wicked, I'm afraid it will take a deal of medicine to make you fit to go to heaven; but I wonder what ails Jamie's soul. Does he swear, or lie, or steal, my Big'un?"

"Not he," said the boy. "He's a little green 'un; ha'n't lived there long, and his ma's as careful of him as a piece of chaney. He don't swear, nor lie, nor nothin'."

"Oh dear! I don't see what it is," replied the other. "May be it is something struck in, as the measles did to poor Eddie Lang, and we can't see it; but God knows, don't he, Miss Fay?"

All the while, "my Big'un" had been casting distrustful glances at Lawtie's new friend; but her kind inquiries concerning Jamie and himself soon won his confidence, especially when she promised some day to come and see them. Joanna, too, rather mollified by "the young leddy's" attention to her unwelcome visitors, added a piece of pie to his lunch, and sent him away brimful of happiness.

"I wish mamma would let me go with you to Jamie's," said Lawtie, as they went upstairs together.

Just then the dinner-bell rang, and with another kiss, the little boy went slowly away to his mother's room.

"Rather an affectionate parting for a short acquaintance," said Kate, as the girls entered the dining-room together.

"I should think so," added Miss Seroy, shortly. "Miss Fay evidently understands making the most of her opportunities."

Louise looked her surprise.

"The hearts of most mothers are easily

reached through their children," explained Miss Seroy, with a toss of her head.

"Miss Fay doesn't angle for hearts, I'm sure, Miss Seroy," interposed Kate, without giving Louise time to reply. "*She* doesn't wear *false colors*." This shot effectually silenced Miss Seroy; for Kate had gained a too intimate knowledge of the boxes on her toilet-table.

Dinner proved even less satisfactory than breakfast to Miss Fielding. She "always preferred mutton to beef," and "never ate mashed potatoes;" and when the dessert was brought in, left the table entirely, declaring puddings "her particular aversion."

"I wonder what isn't," exclaimed Percy, as soon as she was out of hearing.

"If I was as hideous-looking as she, I'd bury myself out of sight," said Miss Seroy.

"Under dust, or powder?" asked Kate, very soberly.

"One might as well be ill-looking as ill-mannered," retorted Miss Seroy.

"Very true," interposed Janet, "and you deserve the rebuke, Kate. I do not see what has come over you."

"If it is not natural," said Madeline, "I should say it was the old man's card. She was cross as soon as she looked at it."

Kate's eyes flashed. "And who didn't even look at her's, after owing her visit here to his kindness?"

"Why, Kate! I should think we were a party of quarrelsome children," exclaimed Janet.

"Well, then, we will make up as children do, and begin over again," said Kate, "for you can not afford to quarrel with me, Madeline, till I have chaperoned you to Prof. Gurtzell. It is time we were getting ready too."

"Oh, yes. I wouldn't miss of securing his services for any money," was the affected reply. "He's so very distingué, and so much depends upon style."

When Kate came down-stairs to wait for Miss Seroy, she found Louise alone in the library.

"I want to beg your pardon, Miss Fay," she said, leaning on the back of her chair, "for standing in the lower hall this morning while you were talking to little Lawrence. Please don't mind," — and she laid her gloved hand gently upon Louise's crimsoning cheek, — "it was such an odd way of treating that sort of thing, I really couldn't help it; but I must say it wasn't quite as attractive — the diseased part I mean — as Nettie's creed, of which I get occasional doses. She waxes eloquent over man's natural goodness, the divinity within, and our eternal progression."

"Has she no Saviour from sin?"

"No sins to be saved from, I guess; at least, those have not who follow the great Pattern closely; and as for the rest, they are to catch up sometime hereafter."

"I have read of that religion," said Louise, thoughtfully, "but it never seemed as if any body could believe it that believed the Bible to be God's word. They accept its 'Peace on earth, good will to men,' and how can they join in the grand chorus, 'Glory to God in

the highest,' while turning a deaf ear to the angel's message, 'Unto you is born this day a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord'?"

"They accept the parts of the Bible that relish best, I suppose."

"I must believe all, or none," said Louise, with kindling eye. "Let one of its truths be set aside, and who shall tell me what I may retain? how know there is a future or a God? Every particle of truth or merit their creed possesses comes from that blessed Book whose divine inspiration they dare assail. Miss Fenno, could such a belief satisfy you?"

"Me? Dear me! I don't know any thing about beliefs. You drew me in beyond my depth before I knew where I was drifting. But it won't take me long to get to the surface, with Miss Seroy for a buoy. There she comes."

Several ladies called during the afternoon, — Mrs. Trahammon, who talked affectedly of the demands of society, and the wretchedly hard life she led, with engagements for six evenings out of seven; Mrs. Lovejoy, cordial and win-

ning, who invited them to a "select company" at her own home the following week; and Miss Bell, a lively, chatty cousin of Mrs. Thorne, living almost next door. Evidently they were to have no lack of friends during the winter.

Frank Knowlton came to tea. He met his old acquaintances in the same free and easy manner they remembered so well, and bade them all welcome to R—— in his sister's name, adding, "If only you could succeed in drawing her from her gloom and seclusion, the indebtedness would be wholly on our side."

Evening brought Leonard Houston and Charlie Stone, and the parlors, so long silent, echoed with gay voices and gleeful laughter, which, it would seem, must jar painfully on the lonely heart above, hugging so closely its great sorrow, that six years ago had banished light and love from that luxurious home. At least so Louise thought, and stole quietly into the hall, when she heard Mrs. Doughty's step, to ask if her fears were true.

"No," said the housekeeper, shortly. "She

don't care how much comfort other folks take, if they'll let her alone. And for my part, I don't think God likes any thing better than to put as much joy as possible close by a deal of suffering, and let it aggravate us like. I've seen enough of it. You'd better laugh while you can, for, my word for it, he'll dash in by and by a great blot of grief and sorrow, and let you sing another tune."

"Surely God can not seem like that to you, Mrs. Doughty," said Louise, earnestly.

"Oh no! I suppose he has been feeding you with sugar-plums all your life, and you think the stock of sweets will never give out; but the gall and wormwood will come soon enough."

"But 'he does not afflict willingly,'" murmured Louise, as the housekeeper made a movement to pass by her.

"Willingly or not, he lets it come, and seeing's believing with me;" and she went on her way.

"No wonder little Lawtie has caught the spirit of mistrust," thought Louise, as she reentered the parlor; and through the whole

pleasant evening, like a faithful sentinel, the impression lingered with her. "A little leaven," for good or evil, how much it may accomplish!

"I shall consider myself engaged for six evenings out of seven, a la Trahammon," said Frank, when the gentlemen rose to leave.

"And you will come to-morrow night?" said Miss Fielding to Leonard.

"As often as possible," he replied, "but not to-morrow evening. That ——"

"Those tiresome meetings!" interrupted Frank. "Can't they run that machine in D—— Street without you and Charlie?"

"I am afraid my moral machinery would not run well without them," replied Charlie, "and, my dear fellow, you would consider it unjust in worldly matters to condemn a thing without having given it a hearing."

"Perhaps you are right," rejoined the other, frankly. "It is some three years or more since I was in a prayer-meeting."

How well Louise recalled that time, — those evening meetings in their own little vestry,

when she had sometimes hoped he too was almost persuaded to become a Christian. The recollection kept her silent, when she would gladly have spoken.

"I would you all knew from experience that they are not tiresome," said Leonard, "but, rather, brief foretastes of the rest that remaineth, where the footsore traveler renews his strength."

Kate looked at him with an inquiring expression, that belied her scornful tone. "That sounds as if you went to get something for yourselves," she said. "I thought Christians went to such places to pitch into the unconverted."

"We have oftener to seek them outside the prayer-meeting, for a chance to do that," said Charlie, pleasantly, "if by the 'pitching into' you mean the Christian's efforts to persuade his dying fellow-men to seek eternal life."

"And yet, at the prayer-meeting we do not seek good for ourselves alone," added Leonard. "Among the petitions presented to Him who

is mighty to save are many earnest pleas for the souls of those who will not ask blessings for themselves."

"So, from selfish motives alone, we must be willing to spare you on those evenings, no matter how great the blessings you deprive us of by your absence," said Frank, gayly.

"It is no more than I expected," said Miss Fielding, turning abruptly back into the parlor.

An awkward pause followed. Kate saw Leonard's face grow pale and his lips compress, after the old manner; and the street door closed upon their visitors.

The girls went back to the parlor with sobered faces, to find Miss Fielding sobbing upon one of the sofas.

"All the result of a bigoted, selfish religion!" said Janet, contemptuously.

"I wish that revival in D —— Street had waited awhile, or chosen another locality," exclaimed Kate, pettishly. "Not that I can't keep myself out of the fuss, — I wouldn't be seen in such an unfashionable church. But Uncle Paul is full of it, and now Charlie and

Len too, and we shall have no more peace or fun with them."

"I am sure there has been no lack of fun this evening," interposed Percy.

"What is the use of fun, if one is expecting a storm every minute? Are you one of the religious ones, Miss Howe?"

There was no answer. Percy passed leisurely out of the room, as if she had not heard Kate's question, despite the imploring look with which Louise followed her. But she cried heartily as soon as they were alone. "A reaction from the evening's gayety," she declared; nothing else, of course. But after a while, she asked abruptly, — "Does the prayer-meeting seem like that to you, Louise?"

"How?" asked her friend, looking up from the chapter she was reading.

"Why, a rest and help. I always went because I thought I must, though sometimes I *did* enjoy it. But don't you ever want to go somewhere else now? Do you *always* enjoy them?"

"So long as we have sinful hearts and weak bodies, I fear few Christians could answer 'always;' but I can say this, — that I seldom come away from one without feeling strengthened, and wanting to thank God for commanding us to go where he '*always*' waits to bless; so that, when Satan makes the place of prayer seem irksome, or tries to keep me away, duty will bid me go; and, far oftener than otherwise, I find my heart filled with a truer, purer joy than I ever found elsewhere, among the world's pleasures. And, Percy, that is one way I reconcile the 'fight of faith,' which Christ enjoins upon his children — and we know too often what that means — with his other words, 'My yoke is easy, my burden light.' Our sinful hearts are so often averse to duties which, once entered upon, prove not only easy, but a very joy. They look so heavy and unpleasant; but if we hear Christ say, 'Do this for me,' we shall find he carries more than half the burden. Be the temptation never so great, he can keep us from yielding."

"But I *want* to yield, — that is the trouble," said Percy, with averted face.

CHAPTER III.

PIN-PRICKS.

"Oh, heaven without my Saviour
Would be no heaven to me:
Dim were the walls of jasper,
Rayless the crystal sea."

AS the days passed by, the girls gradually settled down into a regular round of daily occupation, except Kate, who "abhorred system," and flitted about like a butterfly, poising as her fancy dictated among the mazes of crochet-work, the contents of some attractive book, or a game of romps with Lawtie, who had become her fast friend. Perhaps Miss Fielding was equally uneasy, but no one took the trouble to observe that prolonged attention to one thing really caused her physical suffering; and so, after a few trials to "find the right end of the snarl," as Kate said, she was left quite to herself. Miss Seroy practiced a great deal — Prof. Gurtzell had complimented

both her voice and execution,—and she could talk of little else than her future début before an admiring public. She was really a very fine musician, but her way of expressing herself, not always the most sensible or modest, gained her the ironical nick-name of "Prima Donna" from the girls, which proved by no means displeasing to herself. Percy devoted the greater part of her time to sewing, mostly in her own room, for as she wrote to her mother, "By so doing, my quick fingers and inventive genius, with a moderate expenditure, will soon make my winter outfit equal to the best among us. The girls imagine I am as indolent as Miss Seroy, who spends her spare time napping; and I do not undeceive them, far better that than to let them mistrust my only seamstress and dressmaker answers to the name of Percy Howe."

Meanwhile, Kate obtained no answer to her question, "Are you one of the religious ones?"

Louise and Janet spent the afternoons in the library, reading aloud alternately. In the

morning the latter painted, and Louise usually kept Percy company with her needle. There was certainly no outward evidence that the time was not passing very agreeably to each. That was not exactly Kate's opinion, however, when Uncle Paul found her one day caressing her forefinger bandaged around with her fine cambric handkerchief.

"There is always a sharp pin sticking out of every thing I try to take hold of in this world," she said. "It looks nice, and then pricks. I wish I could have one real good time, with never a bad feeling anywhere about it."

"And that will be heaven," said Uncle Paul, softly. "That will be heaven," he repeated, laying his hand caressingly on her head; "but Christ, who has opened the way for us to that blessed abode, can remove or soften very many of the rough places on our way thither."

"Puts them in, rather, I'm thinking," snapped Mrs. Doughty, who always seemed to be passing by, so steadily did she exercise all day long.

"Doesn't she make you a believer in metempsychosis, Uncle Paul, and that her last metamorphose was from a snapping-turtle?" asked Kate. "But I believe she said rightly then; I think religion would make the way all rough, and that it is an unfortunate peculiarity of this nice world of ours, that every good time must have a sting in it."

"An 'unfortunate peculiarity' truly," returned Uncle Paul, "which the serpent persuaded Eve to plant in the garden of Eden, and which has found a fertile soil in every heart since. But what kind of stings do you find, my little girl, besides a careless collision with misplaced pins?"

"Oh, nothing much; only here are all we girls, — one would think we might have the best of times, and so we do, only there is something, after all I can't tell what; but Miss Seroy is such a puff of vanity, it makes one want to keep saying hateful things; and Miss Fielding is so fretty and dull, it makes one feel dismal; and Lou is so good, it makes me feel cross; and then, you know, there

never is, or was, a nice evening or gay time, or any thing at all, without a pin sticking out somewhere; and as to their being misplaced, — Mrs. Doughty seems to think they are."

"The pleasures of this world are transient and deceit——"

"Now don't, please, Uncle Paul; I know just how that sounds, but our life is not so bad, I assure you, even if one is blue and cross the morning after a pleasure-chase, or gets pricked as soon as the pleasure is fairly caught. There's always a good time coming, for you know

'Hope springs eternal in the human breast.'"

"True, but it is written, 'The hope of the righteous shall be gladness, but the expectation of the wicked shall perish;' and the writer was Solomon, who had 'riches, wealth, and honor, so that he wanted nothing.'"

"But that hope — the Christian's — seems so uncertain, so far off."

"You think only of the life which is to come; but that is not all of the Christian's gladness. 'Christ in us, the hope of glory' doth in this

life make us to know something of the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness toward us. My dear Kittie, have you never looked for the cause of this dissatisfaction in yourself?"

"Yes, sometimes; and I dare say it is because I'm not just what I ought to be; but I do not want to think of death, and duty, and such dreadful things, while I'm young. By and by I really intend to become better, — to be as good as I know how."

"What for?"

Kate looked up in surprise and waited for him to go on, but he merely repeated the query.

"Why, Uncle Paul, what a queer question! Isn't it good people that go to heaven? and doesn't every body want to go?"

"Yes, I suppose so; but who would want you there?"

She reddened a little as if angry, but Uncle Paul, with all his religion and plain-speaking, was very much loved by the impulsive Kate. She looked up with a very affectionate smile and said,—"You, Uncle Paul, would you not?"

Tears in the old man's eyes testified his fondness for the young girl beside him; but he said, with a mournful shake of the head,—"No, no, Kate; I want you, and all my dear ones, ready to exchange earth for heaven; but how could I welcome to that glorious home one who cherished hatred to its king, and wore no badge of loyalty to my Redeemer?"

Kate was silent a moment, and then, carefully avoiding his eye, she said in a low tone, —"I sometimes wish there was a heaven without any God."

"My poor Kittie!" replied Uncle Paul tenderly. "Would you long for a home unblessed with love? a hunger whose cravings you could not appease? a day without its sun? Better any or all of these than heaven without the Father's love, the Living Bread, the Sun of Righteousness. Think of one day unblessed with God's free, life giving sunlight, and you may conceive a faint picture of what heaven would be without him who sitteth upon the throne."

There was a long silence, unbroken save by

the impatient tap of Kate's slippered foot upon the floor; and then suddenly Lawrence came into sight, from the little niche under the stairs, where he had been quietly seated. He came up to Uncle Paul very shyly, saying, — "I didn't mean to peek, or be a little big-eared pitcher, 'cause mamma says that is very bothersome to folks; but I was sitting there to wait till Miss Kate came down-stairs: and when I saw you, I thought I would be still a minute, and then jump out and scare you; but just as I was going to shoo, I heard you say something about Jesus, and I knew I oughtn't to be funning then, so I staid still. But I'm glad Jesus is in heaven, only I wonder if he stays there all the time, and never does nothing; because I am so tired of doing nothing that I wish he would take me up there, where I could be seeing him, anyway. If I was he, I wouldn't have angels be the ministering spirits; I'd want to do it all myself."

"That would be selfish, wouldn't it, pet?" said Uncle Paul, lifting him upon his knee. "It is because God loves us that he lets us

help him work, when he could so easily do it all himself."

"But mother and I do not do any thing. She says God wants us to be still and suffer."

"Mother sent Uncle Paul some money yesterday, and he bought a nice little bed for a poor lame boy," said Mr. Jennings.

"Oh, that was Jamie; but 'twas you did it. It wasn't any work for mother to open her port-monnaie and take the money out. I wish she and I could go and carry it, and help God our own selves. Only she says I'd get the fever or something, but you see I wouldn't, because God wouldn't let me, unless he knew I needed doctoring or punishing."

"What new thought is that, little boy?"

"Why, don't you know? Well, once I didn't, but Miss Fay told me. You know there is things that make us feel bad ——"

"Pricks and stings," interrupted Kate, with a sly glance at Uncle Paul.

"No," resumed Lawtie, indignantly. "They get well in a minute: but things way down in your heart that feel so heavy; and things you

want and can't have; and being lame like Jamie. Well, that is God's medicine to make our souls grow just like the angels."

"But those who love Jesus have their souls made clean in his blood. Does God ever give them bitter medicine?"

"Yes, indeed, 'cause you know dear papa, and nursey too, made mamma promise to love Jesus, and now she does; but she doesn't have any real good times, you know; and she says she sha'n't till she is an angel in heaven: but Job did, after a while. Miss Fay told me the nicest stories, last Sunday, how Job was just as good as could be, but Satan said if God would only take away his nice things he wouldn't be good no longer; so God did, but it only made him gooder than ever. I guess Satan didn't say much more. And folks wondered and wondered what made Job have such lots of trouble, just as folks do now, you know; but God knew all the time. And I told mother if any body said I didn't love her, only for the things she gives me, I guess I'd be willing she should take them all away, and

let them see. But after all it's dreadful hard work to try to get God's great big reasons into our little bits of heads, isn't it, Uncle Paul? Don't you think it is ever so much nicer to look up and say, God knows best? I wish mother would. I ask God to make her, every day, 'cause then she couldn't cry and feel bad so much."

Slipping from the old man's knee, he ran blithely away, while Kate exclaimed, — "Did you ever hear any thing so queer? Where did he pick up so much theology?"

"From the old nurse to whom he referred, and who was his father's nurse before him. She was a most sincere, humble, Christian woman, and I sometimes think Mr. Thorne's conversion, the year before he died, was wholly in answer to her earnest prayers and humble efforts. To her, the judge was always 'my dear boy,' as near, probably, as an own son could have been; and it may be, the brightest star in the crown she is now wearing in heaven is for the soul of that worldly man, saved by her faithfulness. She entered into

rest more than a year ago, yet you see her works do 'follow her.' And who knows what Lawtie's prayers may do for his own dear mother, who is following the Master with an ear deaf to his bidding, — 'Go, *work* to-day!'"

Kate walked slowly up-stairs, watching the satin rosette upon her tiny slipper, as it appeared and disappeared under the folds of the cashmere morning-robe which had been an object of Percy's envious admiration from the first morning of its appearance. And Percy, now catching a glimpse of it as it passed her open door, called the attention of the abstracted wearer to the fact that the other girls were all congregated there, discussing toilets for the evening.

"What are you going to wear, Kate?" was the first question.

"Where?" coolly replied that individual.

"Why, to Mrs. Lovejoy's, of course; are you asleep?"

"No;" with a very natural yawn intended to cover the little effort it was to recall her wandering thoughts. "Oh, it is that 'select

company,' is it? I hate select companies. It's a half-dozen lions, either literary, artistic, or military, surrounded by a row of honorables, with an outside border of ministers and doctors. These all converse learnedly on useful topics, such as, 'Is the man in the moon a real or mythic individual?' and 'What is the probability of ever establishing a communication with him?' and we lesser folks are expected to stand like a parcel of school-children, with mouths agape, fearing to lose a word."

"Take care, Kittie," laughed Janet; "those who grumble at charmed rings are generally perforce outside, and might cry instead, 'We can't get in.'"

"And I am sure I would rather be outside, and look up to something worth looking at," said Louise, "than to be the center myself, admired only by those who, alas for them! are still more insignificant."

"Oh my! what sharp-shooting!" pouted Kate. "I say, Percy, you and I agree, don't we, in liking to be the center of admiration ourselves, let 'dukes or dullards stand around.'"

"Indeed," exclaimed Miss Seroy, tossing her head, "I should like to see the circle that wealth would not admit one to, and set you on a par with the best among them too."

"Yes, ahem," responded Kate. "Money does wonderful things; 'has charms to stock a tasteless pie,' (quotation altered to suit the circumstances) but, my dear Prima Donna, don't you know it is possible to be in a thing and not of it? Now, for instance, just imagine yourself — myself, I meant — conversing with one of those same learned professors or honorables, and comprehending the drift of their remarks about as well as a South Sea Islander would understand my present lingo. Vastly agreeable you would find it, to sit dumb, chewing the bitter cud of regret that you were born a little mental nobody, and had never taken pains to paddle yourself out of the shallow water."

"How do you suppose one of those intellectual Gullivers would feel and act in a company of Lilliputians, such as you imagine yourself to personate?" asked Louise quickly,

having caught Kittie's remark, 'be in a thing and not of it,' and recalling the similar problem in her Christian experience.

"Something like a light-house in a nebula of lanterns, I guess," replied Kate. "He would think complacently of his own intellectual treasures, and look with benign pity on us, poor pigmies, who prefer our sixpenny bawbles to the trouble of getting gold eagles like his."

"But," resumed Louise, "suppose the world, the pigmies, I mean, should think his treasures dull and useless in comparison with their glittering bawbles, for these last are often the most showy, you know; would he ever have a wish to step back among them, to try the ring of their more attractive coin?"

"Don't you suppose he could tell their cut-glass affairs from his diamonds, my dear? and wouldn't he be a simpleton to forget his mines of knowledge would avail, long after their bubbles had burst?"

"Dear me!" exclaimed Janet. "What a fine logician you are, Kittie! I can not for the

life of me tell which side you are on. You certainly began by expressing a dislike to learned people."

"Exactly; but I jumped over among the wise men, in order to explain to Louise how they probably felt in certain circumstances. I find, however, that the bramble-bush, like 'Mother Goose's,' affects my eyesight, and I shall be obliged to take another leap in order to see my way clearly. But there is one thing sure, Lou; that wise man whom I compared to a light-house must be a real possessor, not a mere professor of intellectual attainments; for the sham ones soon get tired of making believe their pockets are full of gold, and begin scrambling with the rest of us for coppers."

The girls laughed merrily, all except Louise, who, having been all the while applying Kate's remarks to the Christian's position in the world, was quite startled by that assertion. Was that true, too, of both?

Kate noticed her silence and began to rally her. "You need not look so sober, Lou; because half the individuals to whom society

does homage are a spurious article, who have risen on the balloon principle, — the less ballast and the more gas. You can worship the other half; and it is easy enough to tell them from the counterfeit. I can always feel it in my bones; but you'll see for yourself to-night, for Mrs. Lovejoy, so I've heard mother say, has a happy faculty of securing at her soirees all the real excellence in the vicinity; and her good-nature always lets in a host of the sham besides."

"Miss Bell said there would be two members of Congress there to-night," said Miss Seroy.

"Yes; didn't you hear Uncle Paul speaking of Senator B—— last night, Lou? He is one of my bona fide Gullivers, I expect, though as a general thing members of Congress should be estimated at their marketable value."

"I will not agree to that," exclaimed Louise. "I would rather believe in the 'seven thousand who have not bowed the knee to Baal.'"

"It might be possible to find seven among

them who have not bowed the knee to any one, for the sake of personal emolument," said Janet.

"Do you believe that of the wisest and greatest of our land, who hold in their keeping the welfare of our republican institutions?" replied Louise, warmly. "You believe that, and yet affirm that in every heart is the divine instinct of right and wrong, which, if followed, will lead steadily upward. Who can hope to ascend, if these follow it so blindly?"

Kate did not like the ominous pause that followed, and began a lively discussion of evening toilets, in which Percy joined with great animation.

A little while after, Louise, passing Miss Fielding's door, heard a half-stifled sob, and venturing to enter unannounced, found her, as she half expected, in tears. Drawing a chair beside her she said, quietly, — "Now, Miss Fielding, do you not see this is quite wrong? We are all sisters for this winter, and as such ought to share somewhat our feelings and confidence. I trust you will not

think it mere curiosity that prompts me to ask what troubles you. "

"I shouldn't think you need to ask," exclaimed Miss Fielding bitterly. "Do you expect your fair faces and handsome dresses are nothing to me? nor the pleasure you all anticipate to-night? Is it nothing to be always loathed, or at least pitied and endured? I tell you the pain I suffer every moment is little, compared with the torture of mind I feel when I look there;" and drawing Louise across the room, she pointed to their two reflections in the large mirror.

There was a greater contrast even than when she had stood beside Janet in the railroad saloon; for now such a look of peace rested upon the brow of the young Christian girl, so much soulful hope and trust looked out of the clear, gray eyes, as to bring out in stronger relief all the unrest, dissatisfaction, and hopelessness of the scarred face beside it. Even Miss Fielding seemed to feel the difference with new poignancy, for she sank upon the floor and sobbed aloud.

Louise knelt beside her, saying, — "Dear Miss Fielding, we can not know just how hard it is to bear; but I do pity you, I would help you."

"Yes, there it is! I must be pitied, but never, never loved."

Kate, impulsive Kate, would have thrown her arms around her, with the exclamation, 'I *do* love you.' Perhaps that would have been right, but Louise was very truthful. She hesitated a moment, and then laying her hand in Miss Fielding's, she said, — "I think sometimes how our souls must appear in God's sight, so blackened and stained with guilt; and yet he loves even the chief of sinners, loves us with an undying love. Isn't that better than human affection? and have you accepted his offered friendship?"

Miss Fielding shook her head, and when Louise would have spoken again, interrupted her with, —

"It is of no use to talk about that. I would not love him when I was well and happy; I should be ashamed to go to him now, just because I am unhappy."

"And yet he says, 'Come unto me, all ye that are heavy laden.' Perhaps he is seeking in this very way to lead you back to himself."

"Had I sinned more than a hundred others, that he must send such a terrible thing upon me?" asked Miss Fielding, bitterly.

"It is written, 'Whom He loveth he chasteneth,'" said Louise, softly.

There was a fresh burst of tears, and a little silence, and then Miss Fielding said, —"No, it could never have been love, but I deserved it all, and more. I never meant to call God unjust, but when I see others so happy, and I am so miserable, those dreadful thoughts will come and I know he must loathe and hate me."

"The dear Saviour never does that. He prayed for his very murderers. Oh, Miss Fielding, if you could only see that it is a father's hand leading you through dark ways, and longing to have you lay your burden upon him! He knows how heavy it is, if we do not."

"No, you can not know how hard a path of duty I must enter to become a Christian, and

the bitter feelings will come back when you are all gone to-night."

"But why not go with us? Are you not well enough?"

"Oh yes, that is not it, but — my looks — my plain dress — my mortification!"

Her desire to go was very evident, and Louise quietly asked to see her dress. It was a gray silk of heavy material, but without any trimming whatever.

"That is very suitable, I am sure," said Louise, "and I have a netted shawl, of scarlet and gray, which will match it beautifully, and protect you from the draughts of air too; and if you will let me take the dress to my room a few minutes, I will fasten some lace I have around the sleeves; and you must let me arrange your hair."

"I couldn't think of troubling you," interrupted Miss Fielding, in the old aggrieved tone.

"Oh, but you must," said Louise, rising to go, "because hair-dressing is my especial forte; and have you gloves? because I have a pair

just this shade which I am very willing to lend you."

And so it was all arranged; and when Miss Fielding came down in the evening with the really glossy bands of hair drawn smoothly back from her forehead into one heavy knot just where it best suited the contour of her head, the delicate lace falling so prettily over the neatly-gloved hands, and the graceful folds of the gray shawl concealing in a great degree the unsightly deformity, — as Louise had foreseen when she offered it, — every one expressed their appreciation of her good taste. No one but Percy knew that the gloves were the last new pair Louise could afford herself that winter for church-going purposes, and even Percy had not noticed the extreme haste in which Louise had been obliged to complete her own toilet, over which they had both anticipated expending so much care.

"I wonder," thought Louise, as she ran hurriedly down-stairs where the rest were waiting, "if this isn't the way God has answered my prayer that I might not be suffered to bestow

too much time and thought on my own personal appearance to-night;" and she smiled approvingly upon Kate, who was arranging a few moss-rose buds in Miss Fielding's hair, despite the twinge of regret that she had no time to procure something similar for herself, as she had hoped to do. But the thought had hardly shaped itself into a sigh when Janet drew her playfully into a chair, in order to fasten among her braids a spray of delicate fuchsias, whose carmine tint suited exactly her pearl-colored moire antique dress. This unexpected addition to her toilet, as well as the kindness of the act, sent a warmth to her heart and a glow to her cheek which enhanced her good looks quite as much as the drooping flowers. But Louise was all unconscious of that. She was lifting a grateful thought to Him who clothes the grass in green and the lily of the field in unsurpassable beauty; and vanity and worldliness, waiting for a hold upon that young heart, found entrance barred against them by angel visitants, — even the love that "seeketh not her own."

CHAPTER IV.

VISIT TO MRS. MYERS.

"For every why he had a wherefore."

MRS. Lovejoy's rooms were filled with the confused murmur of many voices, — gladsome voices, harmonizing with the strains of melody which floated hither and thither on an atmosphere redolent of the perfume of flowers. Thousands of festive halls have presented as attractive scenes, and their fairy-like splendor has been reflected from eyes as bright and gems as sparkling. Yet the hours waned all too rapidly for our young friends, and when they met around the dinner-table the next day, for Mrs. Doughty had been obliged to breakfast alone, the conversation turned wholly upon the pleasures of the vanished evening. Even Kate, contrary to expectation, had enjoyed herself vastly "among the nebulæ." And Percy declared, in a tone spiced with a

bit of unpleasantness, that Louise might well be satisfied, for "hadn't Frank introduced her at once to Senator B——, and kept her in a circle of brilliant talkers all the evening?" But Percy's dissatisfaction must be accounted for by the "pin-prick" she experienced when her dress — which had seemed all that was desirable in her own room — began to suffer by comparison with the richer fabrics displayed beside it. Miss Seroy, having elicited much applause at the piano, was very naturally delighted with the whole affair, for except the introduction to the Honorables, — so quietly done that hardly any body knew it, — she had been the most conspicuous of them all.

"Just the way of things in general," whispered Kate, with a wry face to Louise. "All the brains among us went for nothing, and people will go into ecstasies over the biggest blaze."

Louise reserved her own impression for the next letter home, as follows: —

"And so you see, dear mother, I have tasted my first sip of the elixir of fashionable society.

I trust neither head nor heart has lost its equilibrium, although — without prizing the dear home any less — I feel, as never before, how much there is in life to enjoy, — how much to know. Mr. Knowlton, you recollect, has been on the continent since he spent that summer in our village, and last evening he introduced me to a *compagnon de voyage*, a veritable senator, mother mine, which, I suppose, is not always a synonym for a wise, true man; Kate says they are a recent addition to our United States currency. But Senator B——, you would soon know, was worthy of his honors. His hair is silvered with years as well as care and toil, but he has the most genial of smiles, a dignified bearing, and the pleasantest of voices. Add to his enthusiastically-told incidents of travel, Frank's racy observations, Uncle Paul's pithy speeches, and not a few fine lady conversationists, and you have the intellectual bill of fare which has sent me to my books today with renewed interest, so that I may not always have to play the part of a listener,

if Uncle Paul did compliment me on being such an appreciative one."

A few days afterwards, Jefferson brought up to them a half-dozen perfumed satin-tied billets containing invitations for each to Mrs. Trahammon's on the following week. Kate was delighted.

"That will be a regular affair," she exclaimed, "and we shall trip the 'light fantastic toe' till the 'wee sma' hours ayont the twal.' Shall you go, Louise?"

The latter, scarcely raising her eyes from the book in which she was deeply engaged, answered rather abstractedly, — "I suppose so."

Kate turned around with a very significant "Humph!" and Janet smiled a little proudly; but Louise, again buried in her book, perceived neither. However, Percy did, and that night when alone in their room, she said again, —

"You will go to Mrs. Trahammon's, next week, won't you?"

"Why, yes," was the reply, "I intend to avail myself of every lawful opportunity to see all the varieties of social life; not that I fan-

cied Mrs. Trahammon very much. But why do you ask so particularly ?"

"Oh! there is to be dancing, and I was afraid your religious scruples would interfere. I am heartily thankful you look at it so sensibly."

"But," said Louise, "let's be sure it *is* sensibly. Had you doubted about its being right for us to go ?"

"Not at all, for myself, I assure you. I was only afraid of your strict notions. Janet curled her lip so provokingly, and Prima Donna gave that regular toss of her head, and I could see very plainly what it all meant: Miss Propriety will not go, and that will leave Mr. Frank Knowlton for our own especial use."

Louise colored a little. In what more effective way could the tempter have presented his snare ? Surely Percy was showing herself "wiser than the children of light."

"I am delighted that you'll outwit them," she continued, "and now that the matter is decided, what shall we wear ? Of course it must be something far beyond what the affair at

Mrs. Lovejoy's demanded; and I must have new trimmings for my purple foulard. I put my eye on one for a pattern, the other night, if I can only make my purchases unbeknown to the girls. Let me see, — didn't I hear Uncle Paul promising to take you to see 'lame Jamie' to-morrow, and can not I start with you as if I were going too?"

"Oh, yes, and I was to ask Mrs. Thorne if Lawrence might go, and I haven't thought of it to-day. Dear, dear! I have been so engaged in my books, — even commendable things may engross one's mind too much;" and tears filled her eyes.

Percy laughed. "What does it matter, any way? but I should have thought a desire to see the worthy lady would have put you in mind of it. I am dying to get a peep into her rooms; and you ought to have seen Prima Donna's curls toss when she heard you promise Uncle Paul. It did look, you know, as if it was a contrivance."

Louise thought of Kate's "sharp pins," and was silent.

The next morning, however, she sent by Jefferson an early message to Mrs. Thorne, requesting permission to see her a few moments. To her great delight — for she knew Lawrence was paying his morning visit to the conservatory — she received the reply that she might come up immediately.

The room into which Jefferson ushered her was large and richly furnished. Heavy curtains darkened the windows, besides the shutters, which were all closed, except one looking toward the east, through which the morning sun was shining in a broad sheet of golden light, seeming almost to make the very roses woven in the carpet to dance for gladness. Mrs. Thorne lay upon a lounge, thin and pale, with dark circles around her eyes, and her white hand looking like a snowflake upon her black dress. Opposite hung a large painting of her husband, while upon a richly inlaid table just beneath stood several exquisitely chased silver vases, from which Mrs. Doughty was removing the withered flowers of yester

day, to make room for those Lawtie would shortly bring.

Louise returned the pleasant but smileless greeting with which she was received by her invalid hostess, but could not find courage to make known her errand till the housekeeper had closed the door between them and her own angular visage. Then, as briefly as possible, she told of Lawtie's desire, and her own willingness to take him in charge.

Mrs. Thorne was not at all surprised, but expressed her fears of contagious diseases, or the effect such scenes might have upon the boy's nerves, adding, — "His desire to go is almost morbid; and this morning he was quite indignant when I told him money would do far more than he could, and I would send that instead. He repeated those beautiful lines which he said Miss Fay taught him, —

'The least flower with a brimming cup may stand,
And share its dewdrop with another near,'

and he thought if God wanted flowers to do good, he would more expect little boys to do

something. He is a very peculiar child, as you have doubtless found, Miss Fay; for I believe he has been indebted to you for relief through many a lonely hour."

"Rather that the indebtedness has been wholly on my side," replied Louise, smiling. "To know him, one might be tempted to credit that quaint belief that children's souls come to us straight from paradise, and that memories of its holiness and purity had not wholly forsaken him; yet the teachings of a Christian mother are a far better and truer reason for his innocent guilelessness."

"The faithful teachings of a Christian nurse have done almost all for his mother, as well as himself," was the reply. "And the shadow of sorrow, under which he has always lived, has probably given him his peculiar ideas, his whole life has been so closely associated with death."

Louise could see her whole frame tremble with suppressed emotion and the effort she made to still the convulsive working of her lip. She rose to go, but Mrs. Thorne motioned her

to stay. "I am half inclined to say yes," she said. "I can not hope to keep him always by me, and he fancies you so much. You will not expose him to harm?"

"Certainly not, intentionally."

"Perhaps you think with Lawtie," continued Mrs. Thorne, "that God will not suffer harm to come to those who are doing good."

"I think with him, dear Mrs. Thorne, that no harm, in the worldly sense of that word, can come to the Christian. It may be danger and physical suffering, death even, but never harm, only good for ever more."

"No one can tell how I long for death; that alone can bring me happiness or rest again," returned Mrs. Thorne, burying her face in her handkerchief.

How Louise wished for a little of Kate's impulsiveness, that she might overcome her natural reserve, and lay her cheek beside the weeper's, in mute but expressive token of sympathy! Her own voice sounded so cold and unfeeling, when she could merely reply, —

"I pity you so much. I would be so glad to do any thing to comfort you."

"I would not murmur," replied the other, "but I can never be glad again; the world is full of mystery and gloom, darkness and sorrow every where."

"Only look at that sunlight," exclaimed Louise. "Can God have filled his world with that, and meant any heart to be closed against its joyous entrance?"

She paused suddenly, fearing her words might seem heartless.

Mrs. Thorne looked mournfully upon the play of the sunlight before her. "Yes; the rest of the room is dark and cheerless. I can humbly thank him that he has stooped to show to me his inexplicable mercy in forgiving sins, and providing for us the way to eternal life. Perhaps it was necessary that the heart, so long filled with worldly vanities, should be shrouded in utter darkness before it would welcome that ray of heavenly light. That it may merge at last into the 'perfect day' is my only desire and hope, but the rest of my

heart and life is dark and gloomy, like the shadows in the room."

"If she would only throw open her shutters," thought Louise, "the 'shadows in the room' would flee away of themselves. If I could only help her see, it is just so with our hearts."

But the requisite words would not come, and she said simply, — "We are to bide patiently God's time. When he has need of us there, he will call us; or rather when he has no further need of us here."

"I know, and I strive to be content. This twelfth chapter of Hebrews, you remember it," and she laid her hand upon the open book before her, "seems to me the daily food my soul needs, that it may look unto Jesus and endure patiently the chastening hand of the Lord. Mr. Jennings says I overlook the present, in my searchings after the future; but how much the apostles say of the crown, the goal, the city which is eternal," her voice trembled as she added, "and the 'innumerable company of angels,' the 'spirits of just men made perfect.'"

Again Louise strove for words to express the thought trembling on her lips, that the blessed word of God taught us not only to look unto Jesus as the "finisher of our faith," but to follow him "who endured the cross, despising the shame," by works, making our "faith perfect," until we are with him, "set down at the right hand of the throne of God." But while she hesitated, Lawrence came in, and amid his tumult of delight on learning he was really to accompany her to Jamie's, she took leave of his mother, with a reluctant sadness.

Percy met her in the hall, and, as they went down-stairs together, inquired the result of her interview.

"Capital!" she exclaimed, as Louise told her simply of Mrs. Thorne's consent; "couldn't be better for me; for, you see, it will appear that I went with you, but took another route home, too long for the dear little fellow, so we were necessarily separated."

Louise looked at her curiously. "Why

don't you go and buy your trimmings without so much needless caution ?" she asked.

"If I could leave them, with orders, at a fashionable dressmaker's, *ma chere*, that would, by far, be the most desirable course ; but if the others should know that even the finishing graces of my dress were my own handiwork, their opinion of my *tout ensemble* would perceptibly diminish. You forget I am striving after position, and deception is always allowable in warfare."

How quickly Uncle Paul's card whispered its message to Louise, — "Though we live in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh." She sighed deeply. Some way it added to the weight that had fallen upon her heart during the last half-hour. Instinctively she turned back to her own room to lay the burden at Jesus' feet, to plead in prayer that he would bestow especial grace upon the stricken heart shrouding itself in darkness, and keep her own and Percy's feet from going astray.

Uncle Paul called for them at ten o'clock, and what was Percy's dismay, as she came

down-stairs, to find Kate preparing to go also! "'Twas so dreadful dull, with Janet all engaged in her painting, Miss Seroy in those everlasting scales, and Miss Fielding,—faugh!" and the gray hat and coral danced out of the hall into the street.

"Was ever any thing so vexing?" whispered Percy to Louise, as they went down the steps more slowly. "And now if I haven't got to go into that poverty-stricken place myself! I'd rather have been hung. What in the world am I to do?"

Louise could not help laughing, her countenance was so dismal, and then Lawtie exclaimed, "Oh! I most forgot; my Big'un is waiting in the kitchen to go with us," which added a still more lugubrious expression to Percy's face. She laughed so merrily that Uncle Paul and Kate turned back from curiosity.

"The dirty, ragged creature!" said Percy. "I'd be mortified to death. I won't be seen going through N—— Street with him."

"Why, he won't hurt you," said Lawrence, half-crying; and Big'un, coming the rear way

from the kitchen, in time to catch the last words, sang out, "Nor nobody else darsn't hurt ye, when I'm round."

Percy could not help joining a little in the hearty laugh which followed; and then Louise came to her relief with the suggestion that as Lawrence would be obliged to walk slowly, she would accompany the two children, and very likely Uncle Paul and Kate wouldn't mind accommodating their gait to them, so, if Percy liked, she could go up to C—— Street, which led on to D——, parallel to N——, as she had discovered in her last morning walk, and from there she could join them when and where she chose.

Percy gave a grateful look, and disappeared quickly up C—— Street, lest Kate should offer to take the same route.

"She's a stunner, an't she?" said Big'un. "But if she's afeard, hadn't I as good's run alongside?"

Louise quietly negatived that proposition, and began a conversation with the queer specimen of boyhood, his overgrown jacket con

trasting so oddly with Lawtie's embroidered suit and tiny gloves.

"Is that your own name that Lawrence calls you?"

"Guess I didn't hook it; but the whole on't is Brigham Hales, and he calls me his Big'un, cause why? Once I knocked over a big sarse-box of a news-boy, who was pokin' fun at his shiny boots, an' him a standin' on his own doorsteps, an' sence then him and me's ben great cronies."

"But I can't help wishing you hadn't hit him quite so hard, my Big'un," interposed Lawtie. "You know the little Testament I gave you says God won't let any murderers into heaven, and I never saw him again."

"I'll risk it," said Brigham; "he'll turn up somewheres; and s'pose he shouldn't, I never see the place yit I couldn't crawl in somehow, if 'twas tight squeezin', s'pose as how I wanted to. Jamie's 'spectin' ye," he continued, peering into Louise's face, as if doubtful how she would take what he was about to communicate. "Ye see he wanted ter know jest how the

lady looks; so I telled him near's I could how one of them angels looks in the big picter over there in that church, with a cross 'way up top, you know, with wings a flyin' an' hair a wavin', and dressed all in white. Oh! ye ought to ha' seen his eyes stick out!" And the boy turned a sudden somersault as a sort of safety-valve for his own merriment. "I'll bet he han't slep' a wink to-day, a-thinkin' it over, 'thout his ma's smelt a rat an' got it out of him. I hope that fiery gal won't git there fust, cause he'll think the Old'un has sent one of his folks instid, 'specting to see an angel, ye know, and I shall tell him she's got her ev'ry day clo's on, seein' it's coolish."

"That was not telling the truth, was it, Brigham?" said Louise, reprovingly.

"May be not, but when I've peeked into the winders, where folks has their po'traits all painted up fine, guess I've seen all the picters have red cheeks, and nice, purty lips, and shinin' hair kinder kitterin' round their faces, every thing ez grand as yer please; and there'd be the folks themselves homelier than all pos-

sessed. And ye see I think you was purty enough to begin with, and I only put on some fixin's for the fun on't."

"But did you ever look into the rooms where they take pictures without colors?"

"What, where the folks look in a little hole, an' bimeby the man pokes in his fingers, and pulls out a picter an' whisks it into a little buttery? I've seen *them* lots of times."

"And did you know that the sun makes those pictures, Brigham? and that if you should look in that hole, as you called it, the picture would be exactly like yourself? If there should be a mark or spot on your face you would find it just so in the picture."

"Rags an' dirt an' all?" queried the boy.

"Yes, every thing; and that is the way God sees our hearts. We may make men believe, just as you did Jamie, that we are better or different from what we really are, but in God's sight every thing is plain and true."

"Yes, indeed," interrupted Lawtie, "and you wouldn't want him to look into your heart

and see all the lies and things, would you, my Big'un ?"

"Guess not," was the reply, in the same nonchalant tone. "'Spect 'twould be the wust hole he ever looked into. Don't believe he'd want ter look twice."

"Oh dear!" exclaimed Lawrence, "it does seem as though you grew badder and badder every day."

"Shouldn't wonder; the bigger I grow, the more I kin hold' ye know," was the laconic reply.

"If you had a dish," said Louise, "which would you rather fill it with, the mud and dirt in the gutter here, or those bright-colored things in that window?" and she pointed to a large glass jar of very attractive confectionery.

"Wall! you never was a boy if you ask sich a question, I'll bet a cookey; but if you was a talkin' about hearts, you see it's jest here, — ye can't change one of them into t'other, no how; an' ef this thing a-bunting inside o' me is full of gutter stuff, nobody

can't make it into sich goodies as them, or him nuther;" and he pointed first to the window and then to Lawtie.

"No *human* being could do it," replied Louise, "but nothing is impossible with God. He can change ——"

"Mud into candy? Ho! I guess so; if he can, it's the best thing I've heerd about heaven yit. Lawtie, he says the streets are all made of glass, — purty stuff to walk on."

Kate's laughter would no longer be restrained, and Uncle Paul, sending a comical glance over his shoulder at Louise, said, —

"That specimen does not seem to take kindly to illustrations, figurative or practical."

"Crack? I guess 'twould," resumed Brigham, "let Squire Lewis go staffin' down it; an' he's one of yer meetin' folks, an' he purtended he was a goin' to call a p'leece, 'cos I hooked a handful of peanuts off Biddy Cole's stand. Guess I looked into his store, one day, an' guess I saw the leetle mites of pertaters, all covered up so nice with such thundering

big 'uns. Shouldn't wonder if he'd forgot how ye say God looks through a feller."

Louise changed her tactics. "What does your mother do?" she inquired.

"Oh, she washes by the dozen for rich folks, an' I totes the clo's there and back."

"And can she get the soiled clothes quite clean?"

"That's as how things be. If folks pays well she rubs the harder, ye see; but if they're slack, then she sort o' slips the clo's over."

"But suppose you should carry her a piece of cloth you had picked up from the gutter, could she get it white as snow?"

"'Pears to me yer fond of gutters; but about that rag: why, every old soap-man would say she could ef she'd buy o' him; but she's too cute for 'em; she knows better, an' so do I."

"Now, Brigham," said Louise, earnestly, "don't you know our hearts are just so blackened with sin in God's sight, and if we die while they are so stained and impure, we can never go to heaven? But if we ask God, then he can

make them 'white as snow,' and we shall live for ever with him in his beautiful home."

For once, Brigham seemed at a loss how to reply; and as they had already reached the miserable street where he lived, he darted forward and waited for them at the foot of the stairs leading to Jamie's room. Swarms of children filled the alley, and from every window protruded the haggard face of some idler, man or woman, with the inevitable pipe, sending forth its nauseous clouds of tobacco smoke. Kate drew back with a shudder.

"Is this the way poor folks live? Why, Uncle Paul, it doesn't seem a bit like the way it appears in books. I thought the floor was always 'scrupulously clean,' and 'little flower-pots in the windows;' and when you read about dirt, it doesn't seem like this abominable place. Oh dear! I shan't get over it for a week."

"I hope you won't for a lifetime, Pussy," replied Uncle Paul. "Remember, our Saviour said, 'The poor you have always with you.'"

"But I let papa attend to the benevolent list," she laughed lightly.

"Money will not do it all," he made answer; "there are love, kind words, and sympathy for their hearts."

"Don't believe they have any," said Kate. "Only look at them!"

Uncle Paul shrugged his shoulders as they followed Brigham up the creaking stairs. But at the top of the second flight Kate gave his coat a pull.

"Stay, Uncle Paul, do stop a moment, and let me take breath, or poison, more properly speaking; but if there are any more of these dark, narrow, slippery stairs, one must lay in a supply of some kind of fuel. I wonder if Janet would see a 'divine incarnation' in this sort of folks, ready to follow out the instinct within, and do good for goodness' sake. What a tough time they will have climbing to heaven, if all the light is to come from themselves! I am afraid the germ is buried so deep in dirt it will never start."

Possibly Mr. Jennings had been musing over similar 'wonders,' for his answer seemed very like the continuation of a train of thought in his own mind.

"Such doctrinists affirm our religion narrow, because God delivered it first to his 'peculiar people,' and now offers it only upon conditions; but is theirs any broader if, as they admit, the 'religious endowment,' furnished to every man by God himself, varies in individuals? I can not see their God to be any more merciful or impartial than ours, if he gives to one man deep benevolent affections, capable of higher religious inspiration than another born with less mental ability or amidst less favorable circumstances, and yet leaves their religious enjoyment and attainments dependent upon themselves alone."

"But you forget the educating self-discipling process over which Janet waxes so eloquent, and I like to hear her too; it all seems so nice, and makes you feel how great *I* am, or could be, rather.'

"True, they make it depend on man's own will in a manner. They affirm that one of humble gifts may surpass 'by faithful obedience one of larger outfit who has wasted his talents.' True as the Bible, Kitty; but what will they

do with this mass of degraded human nature, from whose haunts evil seems to have thrust out every vestige of good? Better, far better, a God who punishes wickedness, but who also stoops with a divine love to lift from the lowest earthly pollution poor sin-stricken beings, and offers them salvation on the same terms with which a Dives must comply if he would have an inheritance above. But, Kitty, the morality you admire — their aim — is no higher than ours, only it is Christ who must 'present us faultless.'"

"But there is a deal of hard disagreeable work for us to do besides, isn't there, Uncle Paul? and yet Christ seems to do it all. I can't understand it any way, it is all so strange."

"'If any man will do his will he shall know of the doctrine,'" said Uncle Paul gently.

"See, Louise is waiting;" and Kate hurried on up the next flight of stairs.

Brigham met them at the door, saying,— "Oh dear, he's got one of his bad spells; it's awful mean."

The room into which he led them, although by no means as filthy as some they had passed, was not clean or tidy; but one could easily make allowance for that, to know that the pale thin-faced woman standing by the bedside must depend upon her own hands alone to care for that helpless boy, two little twin girls of four years, and the child of thirteen months upon the floor, besides earning their daily bread.

Lame Jamie lay upon a low couch, his face contracted with suffering, and both hands clenched around the arm of Brigham, who had immediately climbed beside him, and who bore the tight grasp with unflinching steadiness, while with the other hand he wiped the perspiration from Jamie's forehead. One could hardly believe the gentle sympathizing boy he now appeared was the reckless, defiant companion of their walk thither.

"And Janet would call that an evidence of hidden divinity," thought Kate, "but it does not seem to have lifted him very high towards the truth and right. It wants the help of

something tangible outside, or that Divine helper perhaps; and I do too, I suppose." She began to talk to the little girls to help to banish the troublesome idea.

A broad-faced Irish woman, with her sleeves rolled to the elbow, stood by the stove, heating some water in a porringer. Louise asked pleasantly if it was not Brigham's mother, and begged her to procure a little fresh cold water. Then, taking a glass from the shelf, she diluted some of the nice wine from the basket Mrs. Thorne had sent down by Jefferson, just before they started. Its effect was almost electrical, and the boy's grateful look would have moistened the dryest eyes.

All this while Lawrence had been standing beside the bed, without removing his gaze from the sufferer. Louise had quite forgotten him, but now, his sobs becoming audible, she drew him upon her lap, and taking an orange from the basket, gave him her fruit-knife, that he might remove the rind for Jamie, knowing that nothing can still throbbing nerves better than pleasant, useful occupation. The event

proved her right; for he began soon prattling in his quaint way to Mrs. Myers, Jamie's mother, who had sat down on the foot of the couch, to wipe away with her apron the tears that came to relieve her full heart.

"There is some tea in the basket, and some jelly, for I saw mother fix it; you see Mrs. Doughty didn't like it one bit, because she doesn't like — every body" (for Lawtie's sensitive heart whispered just in time that 'common folks' might wound), "but Jesus Christ is stronger than Mrs. Doughty, and when I prayed, he made mother go down-stairs her own self, and get these things; and I don't believe she'll want to die any more when she knows what *awful* — what a lot God has for people to do."

His soft tones seemed to lull Jamie to sleep like sweet music, and Brigham, with a sigh of relief, felt the tight grasp upon his arm relax, and crouched himself down beside his friend, something like a watch-dog at its master's door.

"Does Jamie have these attacks any more frequently?" inquired Uncle Paul.

"No, I don't know as he does," replied his mother; "when he gets weak like, they'll come a little sooner than usual, and I haven't had a mouthful of food for any of them since yesterday;" and she broke into a passionate fit of weeping.

Kate sprang from her chair as if somebody had struck her, and hurried out of the door. Louise would have detained her, but Uncle Paul only smiled significantly. So she contented herself with watching the eager looks of the little girls, as she filled their hands with sweet crackers from the basket, till Mrs. Myers became more composed, and Uncle Paul again addressed her.

"You have never told me you were so destitute, and I have been prevented from coming before, this week, as I intended. You should have sent, for you knew I would gladly have aided you."

"I know that," she sobbed, "but it hurts me so, and I have prayed so often that I might be spared the trial of becoming dependent. I thought I had borne all I could, when

I came to call this place home; but then He took away my husband, and may be he sees I need still more. But I do so want to keep them together the little while I have to live. And one other thing I pray for, that he will call Jamie first; if he will only let me close *his* eyes, I'll be willing to die then. I can trust to God's care even you, little blossom" — ah! even poverty-stricken hearts need pet names, besides the caress with which she caught the little one from the floor — "but who would love and care for my poor lame boy?"

"Can you trust God's broad promise only in part, my poor friend?" asked Uncle Paul, wiping his eyes.

"Sometimes, not always; but he 'remembereth we are dust,' and he won't be angered. I try mostly to live from day to day, and not to think even of the release death would bring. There is something for me to do, else I shouldn't be here."

Louise thought of Mrs. Thorne in her darkened chamber; and Bridget Hales, who, all

the while, had been standing by the stove, with arms akimbo, exclaimed, — "It's a blessed day for the auld place when yees comed into it; if ye bees a hiritic, all the childer's learned to love ye, and there's a dale less of broken heads an' the like. La! ye niver told *me* ye hadn't a crust in the house, or ye knowed I'd a bringed ye a cracker, which is all there is in me ain buttery, till the clothes on the line is dhry."

"I dare say, Bridget," said Mr. Jennings, kindly, "and, Mrs. Myers, you must not think of dying these many years. Dr. Lee did not speak discouragingly even of your weakened constitution; we trust better times are in store for you and Jamie both, before our Father bids you enter into his joy."

He took the twins upon his knee, and began to talk to them, while Louise drew from Mrs. Myers some of her past history. It was one which has well-nigh become stereotyped, so frequently is it repeated in human experience. A happy childhood, a fond, trusting heart, a lovely home, ambition, success, then dissipa-

tion and ruin. And when she had finished its recital, Bridget Hales said to Louise, —

"Ye see, ma'am, there's two ways o' looking at this auld house, fur sure it's a great step up, fur the likes o' me, from the hovel we lived in over beyant; and now that Mike doesn't take a drap o' whisky only now and then, why, it's middlin' contented I am; but it's a dale of a step down fur the poor leddy, who's had a rose-bush growin' at her own door: an' savin' that the God she talks about kapes her mighty cheerful most times, and niver asks her a rid cent fur it, I should think him a dale worse than our priest, who tells me niver to worry about mine or the childer's souls, so long as I pay him the bit o' scrip ivery week."

Kate's return put an end to the conversation. She was accompanied by a boy loaded with large and small packages; and after bidding him lay them upon the table, she turned a very flushed face to Louise, with the inquiry, "Wasn't it high time they were going home?"

Uncle Paul rose immediately, to comply

with the desire thus manifested on Kate's part; and observing that her outlay had mostly included little niceties, dried fruits, etc., he slipped a five dollar bill under one of the strings, and they took leave of Mrs. Myers.

The walk home was very silent. Louise's thoughts were busy over the words, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." Kate was wondering if she should ever care for a "pin-prick" again.

And Percy, in her own room, was writing home for money, to fill the purse which her expensive trimmings had quite emptied.

CHAPTER V.

WHO IS RELIGIOUS?

"The streams of religion run deeper or shallower, as the banks of the Sabbath are kept up or neglected." — CALCOTT.

THE next morning Kate made no allusion to the previous day's experience, except to ask Janet, at the breakfast-table, "How long a time it would probably require for one of those interesting bundles of dirt and rags to develop into a full-fledged angel, or even into a nice respectable person like herself, supposing some one began lecturing among them on the grand sum total of virtue, as combining in itself duty, beauty, and reward?"

Janet made no reply, but Mrs. Doughty, thrusting her fork into a buckwheat cake, with an energy corresponding to the emphasis of her tone, inquired "if she thought any sort of religion would do those swinish creatures a cent's worth of good?"

"Oh yes, Mrs. Doughty; Brigham did not express any doubt about his having a soul, although he was not at all proud of its cleanliness, as we well-behaved people are apt to be. And of course, if any body has a soul, there must be some sort of a way to take care of it; and that is religion, isn't it? Any quantity of ways there are, too, but Nettie's always makes me laugh; because, like Brigham's 'po'traits,' she paints the right in such flying colors, when really it's a dreadfully disagreeable tete-a-tete friend."

"I should not imagine you ever took it into such intimate companionship," said Janet, sarcastically, as they moved back from the table.

"Oh, yes; I keep wrong on one side to gratify self, and right on the other to satisfy conscience, and am hand-in-glove with each alternately."

"In whose keeping will you be at last, Kittie?" whispered Louise, as she passed her; but no change of Kate's countenance showed whether the words had reached her ear; and

Janet spoke immediately, — "There is no need of that; you need follow but one, that same conscience, that inward teacher, whom truth alone will satisfy."

"Ah! but wrong will trip you up, if you do turn your back upon it; and as for conscience, it might do, only neither I nor any body else does follow its leading-strings willingly; and so, I say, there must be a little outward force, either compulsory, or attractive, or helpful, or something else."

"Why don't you seek for it, then?" asked Janet, quite pettishly, whereupon Kate lifted her eyes in mock amazement.

"To prove you in error isn't at all to say I want to set myself right," she replied, coolly, walking off to the music-room with Miss Seroy.

Percy went up to her sewing, and Janet to her studies. Louise, with book in hand, had drawn a large fauteuil in front of the pleasant library window for a "quiet forenoon," when the thought occurred to her whether Miss Fielding might not really be unwell, that she

had not breakfasted with them, instead of moody and cross, as Nettie had said.

What a troublesome thought it was, to be sure! and one that absolutely refused a dismissal. The sallow, mournful face would come continually between her eyes and the page, till, with a sigh, she laid aside her book, and seeking Mrs. Doughty, inquired if Miss Fielding's breakfast had been taken up to her.

"No," was the curt reply. "Miss Dunslep reckoned she'd be down soon, and Joanna's no time to fuss."

"May I prepare her a cup of tea and some dry toast?" asked Louise, Mrs. Doughty could never dream with how much effort.

However, once in the kitchen, it seemed so home-like to be handling cooking utensils, and Joanna manifested so much pleasure in her being there, that it was with a very smiling face she carried to Miss Fielding's bedside the inviting little tray, bearing the combined fragrance of hyson and heliotrope, with its slice of toast the most beautiful of browns. It was so vexing to hear as usual, — "I never eat

dry toast. If it had been cream — but it is of no consequence."

"I can easily alter that," replied Louise, pleasantly, although Kate might have detected a flash of fire in the gray eyes.

She ran hastily down the two flights of stairs, and having received a little assistance from the good-natured Joanna, speedily returned, quite out of breath, but bringing a plate of as delicious cream toast as ever graced a cook-book.

Miss Fielding took infinitesimal morsels of the toast, but left her tea untasted.

"Isn't it agreeable?" asked Louise.

"I never drink it sweetened."

There was no alternative but a third trial of patience and the stairs; and when Louise, quite out of temper as well as out of breath, came back for the third time, it was only to hear that Miss Fielding "had finished her toast, and never drank after eating."

There was not one word of thanks, and only a gesture of impatience, when she offered to arrange the sunken pillows. Nothing, surely,

need longer detain her from her book, only — and she stopped upon the threshold — was it certain she had done her utmost to relieve that aching heart, so heavy with real or fancied burdens? Samp came forward to relieve her of the tray. Joanna had sent him up, for fear the "young leddy might have to dumb-waiter it down again." Still Louise hesitated. She had so little time to herself, those library shelves held so much attraction, the winter would prove all too short for half she longed to accomplish in the way of self-culture; she really could not make a further sacrifice so likely to be unappreciated; and besides, she felt so irritated now, she was in no mood to do any body good. Even conscience let her off on that plea; but something else, a still, small voice pleaded, "Charity never faileth." "While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." "If God so loved us, we ought also to love one another."

If the sacrifice was no less when she turned resolutely back to the bedside, Louise was no longer looking upon it; her gaze was turned

upon that Sacrifice through whom this, her offering of love, with all its imperfections, could be "acceptable, well-pleasing to God."

Bringing a couple of volumes from her own room, she asked permission to read aloud, and without waiting for more than the ungracious "Just as you please," began that beautiful poem by Mrs. Browning, — "The Cry of the Human," "Be pitiful, O God!" Miss Fielding only turned restlessly on her pillow. One selection after another was tried with no better success, till Louise began to grow really nervous herself over the continual uneasiness of her listener. But both grew strangely quiet at last under the influence of that quaint poem, "The City of Rest," beginning, —

"O birds from out the east, O birds from out the west,
Have ye found that happy city, in all your weary quest?
Tell me, from earth's wanderings may the heart find glad surcease,
Can you show me, as an earnest, any olive-branch of peace?
I am weary of life's troubles, of its sin, and toil, and care;
I am faithless, crushing in my heart so many a fruitless prayer.
O birds from out the east, O birds from out the west,
Can you tell me of that city, 'the name of which is Rest'?"

When she finished, Miss Fielding said, briefly, "That will do, thank you."

There was no fretfulness in the tone, sad as it was; and as Louise rose to go, and her eye fell upon the Bible beside her, she quietly re-seated herself, — her heart throbbing a little, lest it should seem presuming, and read in a low tone the one hundred and third psalm. Even to herself, it had never before seemed so replete with every thing for which our souls long; and her voice, growing involuntarily clearer and stronger where the psalmist calls upon the inhabitants of both heaven and earth to render praise unto the Most Merciful, sank almost to a reverential whisper with the concluding words, "Bless the Lord, O my soul!" as if her trembling fingers scarce dared aspire to the faintest touch upon those harp-strings where angels delight to awaken heavenly hallelujahs.

She rose once more to go. Miss Fielding lay quite still, as if asleep, save for the little motion of the eyelids, and Louise stood a moment looking pityingly on the scarred, sallow

face. Can one love God with all one's heart, and not love one's neighbor? Suddenly she stooped and imprinted a kiss upon the hollow cheek, and the angels knew, and Miss Fielding felt, it was not prompted by pity alone. But the day seemed to prove peculiarly trying to Louise. Maggie, the chambermaid, needed an amanuensis, and Kate, occupied by nothing more important than croquet, sent her to Louise, who had only that moment returned to her book and fauteuil. Alas for poor human nature! So soon after her conquest over selfishness, the tears of that recent emotion hardly dried; and yet who will doubt that she was thoroughly vexed, or wonder that she sat down to the task with very martyr-like feelings? But who shall say that "ministering spirits" did not put a helping lens before her troubled vision, when in a few moments she was laughing merrily at herself for making such a mountain out of such a mole-hill?

But that was not all. In the evening, Miss Seroy, who invited all who sang into the music-room, paused before Louise with the inquiry

if she sang alto, and on receiving an answer in the negative exclaimed, —

"Is it possible! nor play neither! I should think you would be tempted to try it this winter. It is considered *so* unfashionable not to know music; but then it would be discouraging to begin at your age." And with a toss of the head she left the room. Kate drew a pin from her belt and held it up significantly to Louise, but even the smile it provoked could not quite conceal the tears of vexation, any more than Janet's pleasant remark, — "You and I can sympathize in having that talent a buried one, Lou."

"But you have a taste for painting, while poor I am really without any developed forte whatever," was the disconsolate reply.

"Time enough, even 'at your age,' I assure you; and didn't you indulge in a fib, my dear little puritan? I have heard very sweet strains from somebody's room."

"It was alto she asked for, and that belongs to Percy. I sing only an uncultivated soprano, but I am passionately fond of music."

"Why not profit by Prima Donna's suggestion, then? She can not use the piano more than six hours a day, and Kate will gladly assist you."

"I should like nothing better," exclaimed Kate, looking up from the game of chess she was playing with Charlie. "It will be an act of pure benevolence, Lou, to take so much unoccupied time off my hands."

And the matter being duly arranged, Louise began to think her trials that day were all destined to end very happily. We shall see.

It was near the close of the evening when Frank remarked, turning to Louise, "I have not forgotten your love of natural scenery, Miss Lou, and am very impatient to show you one of the finest of views from a little hill about ten miles distant. Will you allow me the pleasure of taking you in that direction on Sabbath evening? And you, too, Miss Howe?" Percy immediately accepted the invitation with many expressions of pleasure, but Louise remained silent. He had surely said *Sabbath* evening. Should she say she thought it

wrong? That would seem pharisaical. Should she merely refuse? How uncourteous it would appear! The long pause was making matters worse. She stammered out a refusal, and felt rather than saw his look of surprise.

"Are you not fond of riding?"

"Very, but you must excuse me this time."

He bowed stiffly, with heightened color, and turned abruptly to Janet. "I hardly dare venture again, but will you favor us with your company, Nettie?"

"Willingly," she replied, "as I have no religious scruples about gratifying myself or obliging my friends."

He knew the reason of her refusal then, but the lurking sarcasm in his eye left Louise in doubt whether to be glad or sorry. How far he had wandered since those pleasant summer days!

"And you really think it wrong to enjoy one's self on Sunday?" he asked.

"Certainly not," she replied, with an effort to smile. "I would have it the

'Day of all the week, the best.'"

"What a dreadful old-fashioned notion that is, of keeping Sunday!" cried Miss Bell, who was inclined to be flippant.

"Old-fashioned as the Bible, my dear," said Uncle Paul, who, hat in hand, had stepped in with just fifteen minutes to spare.

"I should know that was you, Uncle Paul," said Miss Fanny Bell, without turning round. "You never mince matters at all."

"No, my dear, and although the truth may be less palatable served up in that way, I am inclined to think people would find it far more nourishing than in the minced and spiced way in which they like to apply the rather stringent commands of that blessed book."

"But then nobody thinks of believing every thing in the Bible, now."

"I am happy to be in the company of nobodies, then," said Mr. Jennings, good-naturedly.

"But the strict observance of the Sabbath doesn't seem to me to belong to our enlightened times," resumed Frank; "and do not many observe it now, Miss Fay, merely because their fathers and grandfathers did?"

"Possibly."

"And is not this punctilious abstinence from pleasure unnecessary? Many church-members are not thus careful."

"I can not judge for them," she replied, "but my duty is very plain."

Leonard frowned. He was rather fond of letting his plummet-line fall exactly where he deemed it ought, no matter what was in the way.

"You do not mean to approve their disregard of such a plain command?" he inquired.

"I have no right to disapprove, ignorant of their motives and circumstances. I, in my own room, may indulge in thoughts and desires far more culpable in God's sight than others who appear to be seeking their own pleasure."

"But you 'avoid the appearance of evil,' which is another plain command, and set the world an example ——"

"There it is!" interrupted Frank; "but to me, any such unnecessary carefulness of demeanor lifts up a sanctimonious face, to say,

'Stand aside! I am holier than thou;' and only confirms me in the way, easy, if it is broad."

"To one we are the savor of death unto death," murmured Uncle Paul, so softly that only Louise heard.

"Of course you class me among the 'fools and blind,'" continued Frank, "but I am very sure no desire to show yourself purer than we worldlings would influence you, Miss Fay. I should like to hear what your religion says about this strict Sabbath observance."

"I can tell you my idea of the use of that religion," interposed Janet, ironically. "It allows men to serve self assiduously for six days in the week, and then make up for it by serving their Maker with a scrupulousness equally selfish, on the seventh."

"That some men, Christian men, do so live is a sad truth, Janet," said Uncle Paul, gently, "but you were quite wrong in your premise. It is the *abuse* and not the *use* of our religion which permits such unhappy results; and you will find, too, almost without

exception, that it is this abuse and its fruits that our opponents hold up before men when they would fling against what they deem religion itself their shafts of malignant contempt."

"But how much more desirable to have God fill our week-days," she replied; "to have every thing he requires us to do contribute to our religious nature, — constitute our religion."

"What shall that constitute which the devil requires us to do?" asked Charlie, who was never careful of fastidious ears when truth was concerned.

"Resist it," was Janet's reply, her form involuntarily straightening, "and make it a means of growth through its added powers of resistance."

"Good," said Uncle Paul; "that is a genuine piece of gospel meat swimming in your diluted broth, my dear Janet. But you misplace matters. I want my religion to help me work and resist, while you make your work and resistance the religion itself. Such a religion provides no ransom for a sinful past;

no Christ to say 'Go in peace;' only a perfect pattern to which our very best bears little resemblance."

"We have not heard your reasons yet, Miss Fay," persisted Frank.

"It always seemed dishonorable to me," she replied slowly, "to spend any part of God's one day in pleasures for which we are not willing to spare time out of our six week-days."

"Do you believe God takes pleasure in such punctilious service?" asked Janet. "Does his honor need that seventh day to preserve itself?"

"By no means. He made 'the Sabbath for man;' our souls feel the need of it, and did no golden cords of the Sabbath bind the soul to its Maker, it is very plain the great gulf of worldly thought and care must very soon become impassable. Isn't that a sufficient reason why the soul should jealously guard those few hours of precious time from all worldly encroachments?"

"But the soul can worship independent of circumstances."

"Certainly. I would not seem to imply that bodily sacrifices constitute acceptable Sabbath worship, but I have a sinful heart easily influenced by outward circumstances, and need to do for it what Nehemiah did for Jerusalem, command that the 'gates be shut on the Sabbath day,' and even that no temptations lodge just 'without the wall.'"

"But it's perfectly horrid," said Miss Bell, "not to believe every body shall be saved at last."

"If only we *could* believe they would!" said Kate. "I'd do just as I pleased then, and it is such a relief to be as wicked as you like, once in a while."

"Why, Kitty, would not love for such a God as that make you do right?" asked Uncle Paul.

"Well, once I had the dearest, best school-ma'am in the world," replied Kate, "and I loved her just as much as my little heart could hold; but neither that, nor her grieved looks nor coaxing words, could hinder me from getting down under the desk to munch

green apples, it was such fun; till at last my hands felt an application of pliant birch, which, being afterwards laid on in a conspicuous place, helped me wonderfully to remember, —a sort of necessary auxiliary to love, I imagine."

They all laughed, and Uncle Paul commended Kitty for her illustration.

"To judge of an infinite Being by such childish folly!" exclaimed Janet, indignantly.

"No, not so, Nettie," said Uncle Paul gravely. "It is only admitting that a government without penalties, be it human or divine, is no government; that a holy God must hate sin, even while he loves the sinner, and that as surely as he has spoken its penalty, so surely will he execute. I would have a religion no less absolute in what it gives and requires than your own, one opening a path to no less infinite hights of moral purity, but the entrance thereto must be through that one name whereby our God can be just and yet 'justify him that believeth.' I want a

Saviour's righteousness to cover my filthy garments, before I stand in his presence."

A little hush followed this last remark, and then Kate covered a yawn with the handkerchief she had been abstractly twisting for the last half-hour.

"I can conscientiously stay away from church to-morrow," she said, "since we've had the sermon to-night."

"And I for having been the unfortunate subject of its application," laughed Frank, as he passed into the hall.

He did not say good-night to Louise; but then, they were all leaving at once, and it might have been a mere oversight. Perhaps she ought not to have thought of it as she followed Percy up-stairs, who was singing gay snatches of melody. But was she less a Christian because, in contrast with Percy's excited mood, she could but feel the ache in her own heart, — a sort of regret that this little episode of the ride should have happened? To be consistent with her profession, ought

there to have been only a happy consciousness of an opportunity for honoring her Master, and no thought of the worldly loss it had apparently been to herself? Nay, we think not; else why did the apostle say, "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation, for when he is *tried* he shall receive the crown of life?" And her earnest prayer that she might not cherish any sinful desires or regrets was surely heard by Him who is touched with the feeling of our infirmities.

"Well, we've found out one thing," said Kate, as the others followed Miss Seroy to the music-room to close the piano.

"What may that be?" asked Janet.

"Why! Percy Howe isn't religious."

"How did you discover that?"

"Didn't she accept Frank's invitation for Sunday, instanter?"

"You simple thing! that is no evidence at all. I know scores of Christians who have not the slightest perceptible mark to distinguish them from the world, except when the communion Sabbath comes round."

"Mrs. Trahammon, for instance," said Miss Bell. "She is a church-member, and a gayer, dressier body would be hard to find. But I think she is splendid."

"I don't," replied Kate, as they went into the dining-room for a drink of water.

"I hope you don't call her a Christian."

"Why not?"

"She dances and plays cards; dresses extravagantly; entertains company or visits on the Sabbath the same as on any other day; buys every thing she wants, and gives fifty cents to foreign missions."

"What a catalogue of direful crimes!" laughed Janet. "And from which of them is my dear Kittie exempt?"

"None of them," returned Kate. "Of course the world does all that, but what business has a Christian with our trumpery?"

"I heard Mrs. Trahammon say," interrupted Miss Bell, "that she thought it real wicked to make people think Christianity all self-denial, crosses, and the like. It was a pleasure to her. She just did every thing that came along for

God's glory, and enjoyed herself, as he doubtless meant she should."

Kate's glass rang on the marble-topped sideboard as she set it down.

"How does she differ from the world, then?"

"Why, she has a hope of heaven," said Janet, sarcastically.

"And will never have any thing more, very likely; but if we are thoroughly selfish beings, and it does not need a long pilgrimage to convince one of that, and if Christianity enjoins one to be thoroughly unselfish, as I suppose it does, I should like to know how the one thing is to combat the other without something of a struggle. But what does Mrs. Trahammon know about self-denial? Do you suppose because I like to gather flowers, and tie up a rose-bush, and walk around in a garden, I can denounce every body that calls gardening hard work? Some body must dig, and weed, and prune, or the garden won't be there."

"So you think a real Christian denies him-

self in every thing, and never has a pleasure?" said Miss Bell.

"No, I have a vague idea there is a nice kind of pleasure belonging especially to them; but too much hard work intervenes for my liking."

"A noble nature will be drawn toward truth and right, without fear of punishment or hope of reward," said Janet, warmly.

"Your noble natures must be as scarce as plums in a poor man's pie," retorted Kate; "for the world has not made any too rapid progress in that direction, with both motives urging it on."

"Your paragon, Miss Fay, is going to Mrs. Trahammon's next week, it seems," said Miss Seroy.

"I know it," was Kate's reply, after a pause. "I do not believe there is any thing in religion after all."

"What harm will it do her, any more than any one?" asked Miss Fielding. "The dance and crowded ball-room ruin health, with their

late hours and excitement, but that will never prevent people from loving them."

"How people are always denouncing sour grapes!" returned Miss Seroy, unfeelingly.

"My dear Miss Fielding," interposed Janet, pointedly, "you must remember that the pleasure found in such places is all some minds are capable of enjoying or appreciating."

Miss Seroy colored. "Perhaps Miss Dunslep doesn't think of mingling with the common herd at Mrs. Trahammon's?"

"Oh yes," returned Janet, laughing, satisfied that her shaft had taken effect exactly as she intended; "I esteem such pleasures very highly in their proper place, as entirely secondary affairs."

"What do you put before them?" inquired Miss Bell.

"Mental gymnastics," answered Kate; "and we had better be going up-stairs."

"But why do you think it inconsistent for Miss Fay, then?" persisted Miss Fielding.

"I do not," replied Janet. "I think her

refusing such innocent pleasures the inconsistency."

"But I *do*," said Kate, emphatically. "What does a body want one foot on a tapestry carpet, and the other in the mud, for? If I had taken hold of heaven with one hand, I would not with the other hold on to sham things down here. Mrs. Trahammon, at least, does not do that. She has taken hold of the tinsel with both hands."

"But why can't persons enjoy this world, while they are in it, and wait till they get to another before they worry about that?" asked Miss Bell.

"That is the way your sort of people do," returned Kate, shortly, "but I never could find that doctrine in the Bible. There it seems plain enough that all this world is good for is to get ready for the other."

"I don't see what has come over you, Kate," interrupted Janet; "you never used to mention religion, and since we came here you can talk of nothing else."

Kate whirled a pirouette at the top of the

stairs, with a nervous laugh. "One must talk of something. I only pick up whatever comes in my way."

"I am glad if it is nothing more serious. I really began to think you might be meditating the propriety of donning for yourself the pilgrim staff and garb of these fanatics."

"If ever I do," Kate made answer, "I won't draw on the world's rags over them."

They were just passing Percy's door, and the latter, still busy over her sewing, heard the last two remarks distinctly. It sent a dissatisfied feeling over her. She glanced at the bed to see if Louise had heard; but she was sleeping quietly, and did not wake till an hour later, when Percy put away her work and extinguished the gas.

"Have you just finished?" she asked, sleepily.

"Finished!" said Percy; "there is another hard day's work before that happy issue. A nice winter of leisure it will be, if I have to slave myself this way all the time."

"Under the tyrannical rule of fashion?" said Louise, roguishly.

"I suppose so," was the pettish reply; "but I believe the old saying, 'As well out of the world as out of the fashion.'"

"So fashion, as well as Christ, would have its followers in the world; the one making them slaves to the world's caprices and requirements; the other bidding them 'overcome the world' and make it their servant to aid them in better accomplishing his will who sent them into the world."

Something like this passed through the mind of Louise; and then the silence of sleep settled upon each young heart in Mrs. Thorne's pleasant home.

CHAPTER VI.

SACRIFICES.

"If Custom, gray with ages grown,
Had fewer blind men to adore it,
The world would be the better for it."

LOUISE did not go to Mrs. Trahammon's after all. If you would learn the reason, turn for a moment — as in story we are privileged to do — to the lonely fireside, where a fond mother reads, through tear-dimmed glasses, the loving words penned by her absent child.

"I am solving the problem slowly, my own dear mother, — this work of ours, in a busy attractive world; and am learning more truly the meaning of your words, 'Keep near to Christ.' It is like going to the armory every morning for a new shield, only to bring it back each night worn and riddled through and through with shots from the enemy. But I

have proved for myself one new fact, old as it may really be. If we pray sincerely, 'Lead us not into temptation,' don't you believe God will answer, even if our deceitful hearts are afterwards inclined to choose the very way leading us to it?

"To illustrate. I wrote you of Mrs. Trahammon's invitation and our acceptance. Well, even after I knew there was to be dancing, for various reasons I determined to abide by my first decision; but all the time I could not leave out of one prayer the petition to be kept from temptation. The day before the eventful one Uncle Paul happened in, and, with his 'good-bye,' asked me to accompany him to the prayer-meeting the next evening. Quite forgetting the previous engagement, I accepted at once, for a storm of some kind has prevented my being at a single prayer-meeting since I left home; and the dear old man was quite out of hearing before Percy, from the hall above, could make me understand her pantomimic evidences of displeasure. There was a little pang of regret at first; but I knew I

needed the prayer-meeting; and so, after admiring the gay costumes of the girls, and lading them with my regrets for Mrs. T——, Uncle Paul and I went our way to the little chapel. It was a good meeting, — full of helpful remarks; and when Percy described her evening to me, I felt sure God had led me out of the way of temptation."

A Christmas tree at Mrs. Lovejoy's, — that was the next *grande affaire* to which their attention must be given: for "every body expected every body to give every body something;" so Kate said. She had decided on some presents already: a chair-covering for Mrs. Lovejoy, a set of cabinet tools for Lawtie; of course they must put their purses together and get something for Mrs. Thorne.

"And then," she continued, "there are all the infantile cousins at home, whose desires Crœsus himself couldn't supply; and my attempt to do it will give Aunt Penroy the exquisite pleasure of settling difficult questions arising therefrom on the rights of possession. And Uncle Paul must not be forgotten, nor

Aunt Candace; and Mrs. Trahammon will expect a gratuity for her extra attentions to us; and dear me! there's my Cousin Leonard, and your Cousin Charlie, and cousins *ad infinitum*, and all at once life becomes an insupportable burden; to say nothing of our dear Mrs. Grouty;" and Kate settled herself comfortably on the sofa-pillow.

"And I," began Janet, "am very anxious to copy that little landscape which you heard Frank say he would like to obtain for his sister because of its resemblance to their birthplace, in time for him to make a Christmas gift to her, if he chooses; and then I have two pairs of slippers to complete, besides the home presents, a cap for Aunt Jennings, and to decide on something for Uncle Paul. Let me see, that translation of Dante's Inferno: I wonder if he would fancy that, and if I can get an illustrated copy."

"I wonder," said Kate, "what is the reason that more or less of mankind, as far back as history can lead us, have believed in a 'place of punishment,' if there isn't any."

"Kate Fenno!" exclaimed Janet, "I beg of you not to begin that subject; you are certainly absurd upon it. I thought you were talking about Christmas gifts."

"So I was," said Kittie, drawing Lawtie, who had just entered the room, upon the sofa beside her. "But I was thinking suppose there should be an earthquake before then."

Even Louise smiled a little, although she laid her hand reprovingly upon Kate's lips. The latter imprinted a kiss upon it, before suffering its withdrawal, and asked, all in the same breath, "What are you going to do for Christmas, Lou?"

She drew from her pocket a small red sock half-finished, and smilingly held it up.

"The dear old-fashioned thing!" cried Kate. "Only look, Janet. Aunt Penroy would think the millenium had begun, if her eyes could catch the radiance of those knitting-needles."

"It's for Jamie, I know," exclaimed Lawtie. "Oh, won't he have a Christmas this year? I 'most know mamma will do something. She

is going to talk with you about it to-morrow, Miss Louise."

"What plan are you concocting with Lou?" and Kate drew her fingers through his silky hair.

"Will it be letting my left hand know, Miss Lou?" he asked, always ready to gratify Kate when it did not interfere with duty.

Louise smiled and shook her head.

"Tell what Uncle Paul proposed."

"Oh, but he didn't think of it first, you know. 'Twas you said we might get up a merry Christmas for Jamie, and then Uncle Paul said he would hire two pleasanter rooms for his mother, if we would see to getting them ready, and fix a tree for the children; and then we will all go on Christmas, and carry them there. Oh! won't it be fun?"

"And you were not going to let us have any finger in such a magnificent pie," said Kate, soberly.

"I wish Mrs. Doughty would make a pie," said the boy, "but then, she wouldn't want

your fingers in it. I do believe she grows crosser every day."

"Uncle Paul was intending to unfold the plan to you all to-night, if plan it can be called," said Louise. "We thought with Mrs. Thorne to furnish funds, and a little exertion on our part, we could make at least five hearts happier on Christmas."

"Splendid!" cried Kate. "What shall I buy, a cooking-stove or a canary bird?"

"As if they were without the one, or needed the other!" said Janet.

"But you haven't been, as I have, Mademoiselle Janet, an eyewitness of the cracked af fair, standing on three legs, with which they managed to prevent the temperature from going below freezing point. Of course I'd better get that; and the bird, Louise, pro or con? there's an objection settling over your face."

"I was thinking that the very trifling expense of its keeping would be quite an item to Jamie's mother, while a music-box to furnish

him sweet melodies, and a flower or two to love and care for, would cost them nothing."

"Oh yes, the 'little flower-pots in the windows,' and the 'immaculate floor;' we are getting to the story part, an't we?"

"I will carpet one of the rooms," said Janet.

"And you, Miss Seroy?" asked Kate.

"If you wish for money, I will furnish any amount; but don't ask me to waste my time or taste on any such foolish thing."

Kate lifted her eyebrows, her usual expression of surprise; and Lawtie, feeling that the remark reflected in some way against his protege, exclaimed, "Jamie's got a soul just like us."

"But it is inclosed in coarser clay than ours, Lawtie," said Kate; "and there is a great difference between a fine porcelain vase like Prima Donna, and a cracked, earthen mug like your Jamie."

"But God likes them just the same;" and the boy looked at her half-wonderingly. "Any way, I know he loves Jamie."

"Why doesn't he give him as many nice things as he does her?" asked Kate.

His eyes dropped a moment, and then looking up brightly he said, "God knows best," and ran away in obedience to his mother's call.

"That is what you call faith, I suppose," said Kate. "If it was only a marketable article I shouldn't mind investing. But come, we must begin in earnest, for business multiplies." She drew a card from her card-case, and writing five dollars beside her own name, passed it to Janet.

"For Mrs. Thorne?"

Kate nodded assent, and Janet, adding a similar sum, handed it to Miss Seroy, who doubled the amount.

Louise received it next, and bit her lip in perplexity.

"I can not equal your generosity," she said, crimson covering her cheeks, "although I would not seem ungrateful to Mrs. Thorne."

Kate hastened to speak, lest Louise should observe Miss Seroy's sneer.

"Of course it won't; she does not need any thing at all; it is a sort of custom, you know; please don't feel obliged to."

"But I wish to do something, and thought of giving a trifle of my own handicraft, but would prefer to join you, if you will accept a small sum;" and she added two dollars.

Miss Fielding, with a grateful but still troubled look, followed her example. Percy had disappeared, and Louise offered to take the card to her. On entering their room she was greeted with the petulant exclamation, —

"I wonder what will come next; it is nothing but bother and vexation of spirit; if only a body were made of money, there would be some fun in living."

"You show less wisdom than old Midas," laughed Louise, "for he only asked to have every thing he touched transmuted into gold, while you would fain convert yourself into paltry coin; and that just after so nearly quoting Solomon's sensible conclusion. What has so unsettled you?"

"It is nothing but money, money, all the

time; it's your only passport any where in this world: and as if dressing for and going to all these places of amusement did not use it up fast enough, we are expected to give something to every body we know."

"So you heard about this? I did not notice when you left the room."

"Of course I did;" and she reached for the card. "I ran away on purpose, that I need not decide there between the frying-pan and the fire. You know I expended every cent I had on those trimmings; and when mother sent me more she wrote that father desired me to make that sum cover all my remaining expenses, besides getting Christmas gifts for the children out of it. You know he wants to send Philip to college next fall, and it makes him closer than ever. I don't know what I'm ever to do. Ten dollars for Mrs. Thorne, who has more now than she knows what to do with, — that's just like Prima Donna! Well! you came down a little from her munificence, I should think; and Miss Fielding gave two dollars, when she couldn't

afford herself a pair of gloves; I do not suppose she really ought to give a cent, do you?"

"No, I am afraid not; but I did not think any thing about it then. Why didn't I have courage to refuse, and so have saved her this unnecessary outlay? I am so sorry."

"But it would look mean not to give Mrs. Thorne any thing, I suppose, while we are here, living on her bounty, if she does have every thing heart could wish."

"Yes, it is very appropriate to show her our regard in some way, — in this, if we could afford it; but I ought to have done as I at first intended, — finish that little basket of mosses and shells for her. I am half inclined to go now, and tell them so, for Miss Fielding's sake, at least."

"Don't, I beg of you," said Percy; "they will think you queerer than ever. I heard Mr. Knowlton say something about psalm-singing and parsimony that evening we were at Mrs. Trahammon's; he wasn't talking about you then, but he had been speaking of your peculiar ideas."

Louise could not control the crimson that shot into her cheeks, but that was all the sign of disturbed feelings Percy could detect, as she answered pleasantly, "I suppose it would only embarrass the others, and perhaps avail Miss Fielding nothing; so I'll finish the moss-basket for that lady herself; no, I'll give that to Kate, and get Miss Fielding something more useful, — that pretty collar we priced the other day, for instance."

"Only to think of having to give something to these folks one hasn't known a month!" exclaimed Percy. "But then they'll give us something in return, it is likely, which makes it more tolerable."

"That is not the Bible way of giving, to 'do good hoping for nothing again;' I am afraid all the genuine benevolence we can boast will be what we do for lame Jamie," returned Louise.

"There is another nonsensical project; as if we hadn't dirty vagabonds enough at home, without coming here to hunt up missionary work! But you need not expect me to do or

give anything there. I shall even be obliged to put the children off with the merest trifles, and mother with nothing at all. Of course she won't care, but I did mean to send her a new dress. I brought her patterns, and thought I would risk the fit, and send it to her complete; for with all the patching this winter she won't find time to set a stitch for herself; but it is simply impossible now;" and she wrote her name on the card with a little flourish, as she asked, "What shall you give Prima Donna?"

"I had not thought of her," replied Louise; "perhaps I can get time to make her one of those crochet mouchoir-cases.'"

"Nothing more than that? Why, I dare say she will give us something elegant, and then you will feel so cheap."

"Never mind; 'cheap' is an adjective you can not use before many nouns in these times, so your grammatical error may be pardoned, and myself too, for not feeling able to afford a larger gift to the young lady for whom I have really so little regard."

"But you give Miss Fielding an expensive collar, and I do not find her half so agreeable as Prima Donna, which is saying a great deal."

"Because it will be a real kindness to her; and I wouldn't give up your mother's dress, Percy. I will help you with the sewing; and it does seem to me as if in that glad Christmas-time which commemorates God's great gift to us — his Son, our Saviour — after his own poor, whom he bade us always remember, he would be pleased that we should bind kindred and loving hearts closer together with mutual interchange of kind tokens."

"That sounds very nicely, but what would people think of us? Truth and love theorize eloquently, but custom says, 'Here is the way; walk ye in it,' and you must take the allotted path if you would have any decent company."

"I am not so sure of that," returned Louise, "but when will custom ever lose its tyrannical power, so long as we have not the moral courage to resist it, but walk meekly on in its worn ruts?"

"That I don't know," said Percy. "But

you will please excuse me from any highway breaking at present. It suits one's feelings, on the whole, to follow the ruts. Don't you know, at home, people never would take that new cut where they straightened the road, till they fenced up the other?"

"Yes, I know," replied Louise, and a thoughtful look came over her face as she continued slowly, "I wonder if that isn't the way God has to deal with us sometimes. We often try our puny strength against the bars before we will yield, and follow the way his infinite wisdom knows is best for us, and which we ought to choose just at the sound of his voice."

Percy said nothing, but handed back the card to Louise, who looked at it mechanically, and then exclaimed, in a tone of astonishment,—

"Why, Percy! you can not surely mean this?"

"Why not?"

"Give five dollars to Mrs. Thorne, and stint the children in their presents?"

"What else can I do? When 'I am in

Rome I must do as the Romans do.' Do you think I will have Prima Donna shake those long curls at my expense? I must keep up in her estimation till after Christmas at least. Haven't you observed her increased attention to me since I spoke of knowing Gov. H——'s family? It was accidental, my doing so, you know, for I despise borrowed plumes as much as any one, and I only spent one day with them at Uncle Henry's last summer; but it was so amusing to see the change in her demeanor."

"What do you care for her opinion, any way?"

"Who knows of what value her friendship may be some day?" she answered lightly. "A 'friend of the mammon of unrighteousness' is not to be despised."

"And shall I carry the card down?"

"Yes, and have it over with."

"But you will get your mother a dress?"

"Perhaps so; after I get the other presents, if there is any thing left: a delaine, may be, not the thibet I had intended."

Going slowly down-stairs, Louise tried to adjust the conflicting claims of right and custom. Gifts to her companions she felt to be proper, and was willing to make them commensurate with her means, till Percy spoke of a more valuable return, and even then she saw no necessity for changing from what she felt to be right for herself. But about Jamie there was this trouble. She would like to have Mrs. Thorne's money do all that money was needed for, and save her own funds for the dear ones at home; but ought she not to give of her own to the needy? How far would self-denial step in upon certain home-plans she had been indulging in, and what was right? If she was only a child again, doing without some toothsome morsel in order to drop the copper fruit of the self-denial into the missionary-box, with the happy consciousness that the offering was purely benevolent, for "mother said so"! But to her maturing mind life's problems were thickening, and knowing herself amenable, she must meet and solve them for herself.

But not alone: she did not forget, —

" ——— God's hand controls
Whate'er thou fearest:
Leaning on him, make with reverent meekness
His own thy will:
And with strength from him shall thy utter weakness
Life's task fulfill."

In the secret closet of her thoughts did her soul prostrate itself before him "who seeth in secret," and believed the promise, "he shall reward thee openly."

She found Kate alone in the parlor, who, with a careless glance at the card, thrust it into her porte-monnaie, saying, "The next move is to decide on the article itself; no easy matter where every thing desirable is already possessed. We'll not have to be particular about Jamie. By the way, Uncle Paul has been in while you were up-stairs; something would prevent him coming to-night, and so he dropped in now, about that fine Christmas plan of yours, which he does not lay claim to at all, except as an indorser, — you needn't blush. He says he has found two very pleasant rooms, with a closet thrown in,

for which he will pay a year's rent in advance. Mrs. Thorne has agreed to pay for all the painting, papering, and repairing necessary to make them what we should fancy, and after that, he advised us to make all else done for Jamie and his relatives the result of our own benevolence and self-denial, for two very good reasons: he knew of several worthy families much in need of Mrs. Thorne's further bounty, and reason number two,—the return we should have in pleasurable emotions, agreeable sensations, et cetera. I suppose he was thinking how entirely new both cause and effect would be on our programme. Now, I dare say, you are so used to doing good it comes quite natural."

Louise only smiled: she was thinking how Uncle Paul had answered her query; and a little sigh escaped her, as the home plans slipped away into the region of impossibility, and Kate rattled on.

"You ought to have seen Prima Donna's curls swing. I actually believe they have learned to go of themselves whenever the tip

of her nose begins to ascend. I wonder if she has such an inexhaustible supply of the wherewithal. I thought the allowance father gave me was extremely liberal, and told Uncle Paul I was afraid I shouldn't get a taste of genuine self-denial this time, but since he went away I've been computing a little all the presents I intended to bestow, and find there must be retrenchment somewhere. It must not be for Jamie, that's certain; but where? ay, 'there's the rub.'"

"Couldn't we omit that intended for Mrs. Thorne, who really needs it so little, or at least get a less expensive one," asked Louise, boldly.

"Oh, no! that would never do; what would people say? You could never persuade Janet to that move."

"But she admires right and justice, and seems willing to follow them."

"Ah! but the right would not present itself to her in that light at all," returned Kate. "It is only you extremely pious people who have the faculty of seeing things crooked

where you would gladly believe them straight, and who plunge in the knife-blade and slice off the crooks, no matter how it aches. Now, we blind people get rid of a deal of trouble that way. Besides, Prima Donna couldn't give up the pleasure of hearing Mrs. Thorne's young guests commended for the taste and generosity displayed in their exquisite gift, nor myself, either," she added, frankly; "it tastes so nicely, you know. We could better dispense with one to Uncle Paul, for he would know and appreciate the why."

"But we really *love* him," said Louise, "and one wishes to express the feeling then."

"I know that," returned Kate, "and that is the reason I can not quite make up my mind to leave off my lists the respected heads at home, nor the pigmy cousins, although I can't think of a thing they absolutely need. I believe I must get less expensive presents for each, and thereby lose the satisfaction of thinking how my name is being coupled with superlatives, and my taste commended as beyond comparison; and that will be my self-sacrifice, you see, — a bitter pill for my vanity."

Another little sigh accompanied Louise's thoughts as they flew homeward, where she knew of so many wants, — not necessities, thank God! but desires cherished by the ones dearest to her which she had so longed in part to gratify. *Her* self-denial required the relinquishment of this; Kate's, a little mortified pride. How strange it was, — this difference! Would it all be made equal in a future world, or were there hidden threads in the present web, weaving the pattern complete, all the while she could see only the tangled thrums? But Kate did not like long pauses, and resumed, —

"I do not think there is any danger but that we can accomplish all we wish for Jamie. Leonard is to call for us this afternoon to visit the rooms; Uncle Paul advised us to go and decide what ought to be done, and then appoint one of us chairman of a committee of arrangements (and we put you in directly, by acclamation), and you see, if we get Charlie, and especially Frank, interested, we'll put a sly finger in their pockets occasionally. Oh, I

have it! we will tell them they need not give us any presents, but expend it all in charity; and if that isn't self-denial, on my part, I'll never try again. An't you willing?"

"Certainly, but suppose they never intended giving us any thing."

"Of course they must; don't you see custom says so, for they are invited with us to the tree? I was hoping for something magnificent from Mr. Frank; but I begin to feel the queer sensation already,—the pay for my self-denial, I suppose; a small dose has a great effect, you see, because my system is not used to it. Perhaps the other girls won't agree, but however, we'll propose it. And now you haven't told me one of your plans for Christmas, except Jamie's socks. Isn't there a pair of slippers for the pater familias?"

"No, those came in play last Christmas, and the dear man has so little leisure, they are still as good as new. But I have a dressing-gown cut out and half completed, which is to answer instead."

"And the mater?"

"I had intended one of those charming stereoscopes for her. She is so much interested in other places and people, although seldom a half mile from the old farmhouse; but I find it is beyond my present means, and must think of something else; can not you advise?"

"A chair-covering, — I am crazy over those."

Louise shook her head. "Too much time and money."

"Well, a traveling-bag, then, worked in the same way, — worsteds are so lovely this year."

"But mother so seldom goes out, except to church, it would be an entirely superfluous article."

"Oh, I have it! a pair of moccasins, then; those would be charming, done in gray and crimson or purple. I'll show you; and how busy we shall all be! What will become of your music? such a pity to give that up, when you have taken hold so nicely."

"I can rise an hour or two earlier and gain time for my practice, if my teacher doesn't tire of the lesson hour."

"No danger of that, I assure you, with

such a pupil; but it is beyond my comprehension, with so much on your mind, how you can set yourself about any thing like regular practice. It is tiresome enough any time; and then to get up so early, — dear me! that would quite settle the matter for me; too much trouble for the profit."

"But we can not have any thing desirable without trouble," said Louise, "not even in this world; fame, wealth, honor, success in any line, must be labored for, and yet ——"

Strange that when the desire to say something to Kate about her soul was almost continually in her mind, it was so hard to speak the words upon her very lips; yet who has not felt a like reluctance?

"And yet what?" asked Kate, after that moment of silence.

"There are people who say a God like ours could never have made it so difficult for us to gain heaven; the crucifying of self, I mean, and the duties resting upon the Christian. They say he could not have meant a religious life to be at all hard; it should have been

nothing but happiness, ease, and attractiveness. Isn't it strange they are willing to work hard for the things that 'perish with the using,' but want heaven put right into their hands? But I have thought, dear Kate, it might be your feeling, perhaps; and I do so wish you would try the service God asks of us, and see for yourself how through 'grace sufficient' he verifies his word, 'My yoke is easy.'"

Kate did not seem offended. She did not turn away in sullen silence as so many do. She was Kate Fenno still. She gave Louise an impulsive kiss, and then danced into the hall, only looking back to say, —

"Please remember, I don't like sermons when the application comes so quickly, and the audience is so thin."

CHAPTER VII.

DUTY AND ITS REWARD.

"Come unto me, ye weak and faint and weary,
With torn and bleeding feet and wounded breast;
Sad wanderers on the mountains dark and dreary,
Come unto me, and I will give you rest."

THE girls were very busy. Even Miss Fielding had begun the inevitable slippers for Leonard, and a traveling-bag, under Kate's tuition, for a "dear lady friend." Janet was wholly engrossed in her picture, whose growing promise of loveliness they all admired, from Mrs. Doughty down to Big'un, whom Lawtie dragged up to the studio one day, overcoming his determination to examine every thing on the way thither, with "You are going to see something ever so much prettier than all these;" an assertion so true in its fulfillment that Lawtie had to make equally strenuous efforts to get him down again, and would hardly have succeeded, had not Mrs. Doughty

seconded the motion with a very ominous look in her eyes.

Louise had few idle moments. Not only were her gifts to be chiefly her own handiwork, but a large proportion of the labor and oversight attending the preparation of Jamie's new home devolved upon her. There was the carpet to be selected, plain and durable, for which Janet "could not spare time, and Lou could do it so much better;" the pattern of paper to be decided upon, and the simple white curtains to be made; besides the dark print dress for Mrs. Myers, which the difference in value between a stereoscope and the moccasins had enabled her to purchase. Kate was to assist in the last; but Mrs. Doughty, seeming to catch the spirit of kindly feeling which Christmas was bringing, hunted up an old thibet of her own and set Kate remodeling it for the twins; after which, much to their surprise, the housekeeper herself began doing over an old suit of Lawtie's for Jamie, whose wasted form bore little witness to a half-score years of growth.

"It was as good as new to begin with, and altogether too good to be thrown away on common folks," said the worthy lady as they sat stitching away together.

"That's only the sediment of her nature working off," whispered Kate; "there must be good wine somewhere, to be bottled up yet in a religious flask, I dare say."

"A very poetical comparison," returned Janet, "only slightly inconsistent, as sediment unfortunately sinks to the bottom."

Just then Lawtie, who was as happy as a bird in gayest summer time over "this beautifulest Christmas," came in, holding up the nicest little flannel dressing-gown for lame Jamie, made with his "mamma's own-ey ton-ey fingers, too."

Kate bent steadily over her sewing. She, as well as Louise, had noticed the exultant tone of those last words, and was thinking of Uncle Paul's remark, "Who knows what Lawtie's prayers may yet accomplish?" But Louise little suspected when, very shortly, a lively jest was tossed across the table from Kate's sparkling

eyes and laughing lips, that deep down in Kate's heart lingered the half-unconscious thought, "I wonder if any one is praying for *me!*"

Only a few concerts and lectures occupied their evenings. Every thing else seemed waiting for the Christmas and New Year's gayeties, except the prayer-meeting, which, despite her hurry, Louise managed to attend regularly with Uncle Paul. Her music, too, was not neglected. By rising early she gained two hours for practice before breakfast, besides her quiet time alone in the library, where at the throne of grace she "buckled her armor on." Two hours of monotonous, first-lesson practice it was, only that she varied it with simple songs whose accompaniments her fingers seemed instinctively to feel after.

Coming one morning with a light step to the music-room, which, situated in one wing of the house, was quite removed from the other apartments, what was her surprise to find Mr. Frank Knowlton sitting on the music stool, his hat thrown carelessly on the piano, and him-

self busy looking over a pile of music. She withdrew softly, but not in time to escape detection. He came forward with his habitual ease, declaring her apology entirely uncalled for; that if either, he was the trespasser, having this morning yielded to the force of an old habit, which since their coming he had forgone for fear of disturbing them; adding, "If this happy *rencontre* proves the only penance, I shall certainly decline promising never to do so again."

In return, Louise confessed her ignorance of musical matters, Kate's kind offer of assistance, and the early practice necessitated by the hurry of holiday preparations.

There was no studied politeness about Frank Knowlton, but he had a pleasant facility, so rarely found, not only of adapting himself easily to times and places, but of giving others a feeling of adaptability also, as if one was not wholly composed of angles and elbows. Else there might have been some awkward feelings of constraint during the next two hours, while under his careful inspection the usual practice

was gone through with. As it was, Louise received many a useful hint, unaccompanied by the slightest display of her companion's superior knowledge, and felt, when he sportively criticized the songs they sang together, that every criticism plainly pointed out a path to improvement.

The breakfast-bell recalled them from music to muffins.

"May I have this incentive to early rising in future?" he asked.

"It will be my only time for practice till after the Christmas hurry," she replied.

"That reminds me, I am positively forbidden to put a present upon the tree for a certain friend of mine, — '*Voila bien de quoi se facher!*'"

She looked up half in doubt, but immediately recollected herself.

"Oh, that was Kate's project. I was not aware the custom was so binding as to need a release on our part, but was very ready to turn your benevolence into worthier channels."

"Kate's idea? I did not refer to that. The

little sprite knew to what tune she was dancing; but I understood Miss Percy, that you 'especially desired me to abstain from any needless expense on your account.' Recalling my own pleasant memories of our lang syne friendship, Miss Fay, I could devise no reason for such a singular request, unless you scorn to receive even a token of kindly feeling from so graceless a reprobate as myself, on the principle that the partaker is as bad as the thief."

Was he not showing the wrong side of himself in these uncourteous words? Ah, he had not forgotten her refusal to take that Sabbath evening drive, and the reproof it necessarily conveyed touched him more than he would willingly have owned. A very perceptible soreness of feeling still remained, and if passion never so little encroaches upon reason, how quickly the tongue is tainted with its venom! Is not this true, even after the breath of a better life has been the second time breathed into man by Him who formed us of insensate dust? How much more so, when the human will has never bowed to the divine!

Louise did not answer. She was trying to think what he could possibly mean.

"Of course our ways have diverged greatly since then," he continued. "While you have made rapid progress towards the Celestial City, I have been chasing the bubbles in Vanity Fair. I was presumptuous to think of resuming the intercourse where it was broken off."

After that, Louise could not steady her voice sufficiently to answer, and only lifted her eyes with one quick, reproachful look. But that was sufficient. Its grieved expression sank below that troubled surface of feeling down into his better nature. He hastened to say, —

"I may have misunderstood Miss Howe, but you will admit it was not very flattering to find yourself forbidden an expression of friendship, minus any reason therefor."

"I can not think to what Percy referred. Beyond assenting to Kate's proposal, I have never mentioned the subject," Louise replied, at length; adding in a firmer tone, "but you have not taken up the friendship where it was

laid down, Mr. Knowlton, if you believed of me what you seemed to insinuate."

Perhaps that flash of wounded pride suited him better than humility would have done.

"To find myself mistaken leaves *me* nothing to forgive," he said playfully, "and with no resource but to throw myself upon your clemency. I stand convicted, misled, and affronted by one of our friend Percy's random speeches; but I ought not to detain you, for I can imagine the blackness already gathering about the horizon of Mrs. Doughty's gold-bowed glasses. Won't you grant me free pardon, and as a proof of the same, suggest that worthier channel 'for my surplus gratuities?'"

She gave him her hand in token of renewed amity, as she replied, —

"It would be better for you to pay a visit to the 'domicil,' as Kate has christened it, and see for yourself if there is any need unsupplied."

"But what are these?" he asked, taking from the table an unfinished set of paper fur-

niture, and various other trifles, her work at odd moments for Jamie's Christmas-tree.

"This takes your time," he said, when she had told him. "Why not patronize the toy-counters?"

She colored a little, and Percy would have turned aghast at her reply.

"Simply that my purse exhausted its resources, and left me no other resort but this, which I am vain enough to think answers every purpose."

"Of course Jamie would prize them more, fashioned by your own hands," he replied, pleasantly slipping the box into his pocket, "but it is taxing yourself too heavily. I know a fond mother who would notice an unsual pallor on somebody's cheeks this morning. Will you trust me to supply all that is needed in this case?"

Her assent was very hearty. It was such a relief even to have those trifles off her hands. In her gratitude she quite dismissed all remembrance of his unkind words, and with them the wonder how Percy could so have

misunderstood or misquoted what she had said about presents. Congratulating herself that no more unpleasant results had ensued, she hurried into the breakfast-room.

Kate inquired what particular exercise had offered more enticing melody than the breakfast-bell, but the brief answer of "counterpoint," even with the roguish sparkle of the speaker's eyes, failed to elicit any more questions, they were all so busy discussing the present for Mrs. Thorne; and Louise kept her own counsel.

After that, if Kate observed an evident improvement on the part of her pupils the meed of praise was very generously divided between Louise and herself, and no shadow of the merry doings below crossed the dreams of the later sleepers above during those morning hours. Never had one more patience, never another more perseverance, than the two who almost every morning sang together the songs that best suited their mood, fingered tiresome exercises, mastered difficult chords, and filled up the pauses with pleasant conversation. In

regard to the last, Louise could not forget that one subject was never touched upon. More and more earnestly she prayed that grace and boldness might be given her to speak for Jesus whenever opportunity should present, but Frank (and the Tempter) knew, if she did not, how the opportunities sometimes seeming almost at hand were so skillfully parried.

Musically and intellectually, however, his frequent coming was a pleasant means of improvement to Louise, and although Mrs. Doughty, passing the open door, sometimes nodded her head sagaciously, ill-will to the others, if not good-will to Louise, kept her silent. Not that Louise herself took any pains to conceal the matter. She simply said nothing, and perhaps it was just as well; for the girls had already become a little jealous over her growing popularity at home and abroad, especially since Mrs. Lovejoy had begun frequently to consult her about the arrangements for Christmas eve.

We said "the girls;" but this is not quite correct. Miss Fielding and Kate extracted

only the "honey of delight" from the blossom of their friend's success. Miss Seroy and Percy feasted on the "poison of envy," the latter being out of sorts generally over her hurry and perplexity. She had purchased a very expensive handkerchief for Miss Seroy, and gifts equally valuable for Janet and Kate, contenting herself with the merest trifles for Miss Fielding and Louise, in order to reserve sufficient of her rapidly diminishing funds for the children's gifts. But even this was afterward drawn upon in order to compete with Prima Donna in their present to Uncle Paul, till, really ashamed of the unimportant purchases to be sent home, she endeavored to atone by cutting paper-sets and the like, such as Louise had been preparing for Jamie. But her disturbed spirit ill fitted her for such delicate work; she spoiled the paper, cut the wrong lines and her own fingers quite as often, and really made herself very nervous and miserable.

Over-exertion was also affecting Miss Fielding; and one day about a week before Chris-

mas, Louise, habited for a walk to "the domicil" stopped at her door, on her way downstairs, to find her suffering very severely, perhaps not more from the headache brought on by attention to her work, than because the work itself was still so far from completion.

Louise hesitated. It did not seem possible to give up the visit to "the domicil" that day especially, which was to see the finishing touches given to Jamie's suite of rooms, even the setting of the "little flower-pots in the window." Besides, Miss Seroy having really been as good as her word in furnishing almost every needed article of kitchen furniture, they had anticipated no little amusement in its proper arrangement in kitchen and closet, particularly as Brigham's mother was to assist in the labor, the latter having been admitted into the secret so that on Christmas day she might see to transferring the scanty furniture from the old to the new abode, while Uncle Paul took Mrs. Myers and the children to ride.

Louise stood irresolute, smoothing the fingers of her glove, one after the other. Miss Fielding certainly needed comfort and assistance, but was it her duty to give up that last pleasant work for Jamie to bestow it? Kate's voice came floating up the stairway in broken snatches of a hymn, whose music had so charmed her as to linger almost entire in her memory after hearing Leonard sing it once or twice.

"Go work to-day, in the vineyard of the Lord;
Go work to-day, work to-day."

"Go and work, — Kate has decided for me," said Louise to herself, stepping into the hall, and closing the door after her.

What brought so strange a picture to her mind just then? — the lonely highway from Jerusalem to Jericho; the suffering, disabled traveler by the roadside; the man of Samaria passing by, mayhap on some zealous service of kindness to his fellow-men, his heart full of what was to be accomplished at his journey's end, and yet his ear open to that nearer cry of distress; truer love to the Mas-

ter staying him from the distant, perhaps pleasanter mission, till, as far as possible, he had ministered to his neighbor's necessities. Had her earnest petition that morning, "Lord, what wilt thou I should do for thee this day?" nothing to do with it?

Sometimes the answers to our prayers come so disguised that we refuse to welcome the heavenly visitant; but of late, the love that "seeketh not her own" had been keeping the portals of that young heart wide open to God's claims: self-sacrifice was beginning to tear off the bolts and bars with which selfishness struggles to close them.

Louise ran down-stairs to where Kate and Janet were waiting. "I am so glad you have decided to go, Nettie, for I must petition to be left at home," she said, hanging her shawl very resolutely on the hat-tree.

But she found there was no putting them off without a reason; and then Kate was the nearest to being positively angry that Louise had ever seen her. She blamed Miss Fielding for not beginning her slippers before, and re-

proached Louise for preferring her company to theirs, or for having grown so indifferent to Jamie's need as to let any such thing interfere with their plans.

"But it will not," replied Louise, pleasantly; "you and Janet can do just as well without me."

"It won't be half the fun," pouted Kate.

Kate never thought of the "fun" Louise herself would lose by remaining at home; nor did the pleasant answer bring it to mind. "Poor Miss Fielding has so little fun of any kind, dear Kate."

"That is too true," said Janet, "but if we could think of some plan by which to please Miss Fielding and ourselves too, all the better; of course there is no use in asking Prima Donna to help on the slippers, but the 'domicil' can wait until to-morrow."

Louise knew Kate had many other plans for the morrow, and that Janet was unable to paint that afternoon on account of waiting for her picture to dry, which to-morrow would be ready for its final touches, and insisted on their going without her.

Miss Fielding had fallen asleep, but the unfinished slipper lay in her work-basket. Taking it up, Louise began to work diligently, and soon became so interested in the rose blossoming under her touch as quite to forget every thing else; not even noticing that after a short, uneasy drowse Miss Fielding had awakened and lay looking steadily at her.

But when, by and by, the latter made a motion to rise, Louise turned around and held her work up for inspection with the smiling inquiry, "Does it suit you?"

"Entirely. But you were going to walk."

"I know, but walks after Christmas will be *apropos* as ever, and these household comforts quite *apropos de rien.*"

"Thank you, but I would rather you should lay them down, and talk to me a little while."

"But I can talk and work too, if you will lie down again."

Miss Fielding, however, preferred to sit up; and having bathed her face and adjusted her hair and collar, she drew the low rocking-chair

beside Louise, and again offered to relieve her of her work.

"And the headache, —" began Louise.

"Is not the worst part of the ache," interrupted Miss Fielding, burying her face in her hands and sobbing convulsively.

Louise cried too, in very sympathy, for what words could she offer? She had thought her own sacrifices and trials weighty in comparison with Kate's; but what of this heart, so young in years, but shackled with pain, poverty, and deformity of person, — able to grasp so little of life's great abundance?

A line of yesterday's reading recurred to her mind, —

> "Is nature's pity more than God's?"

and another, —

> "Deep below, as high above,
> Sweeps the circle of God's love."

Yes, she believed that; but not as the author seemed to do, by ascribing to God the attributes of an indulgent, injudicious parent, whose unwise love shrinks from inflicting mer-

ited penalties. True, to believe in God at all, she must believe that the shadows ever crossing earth's brightest sunlight — the suffering and misery from which no human being is exempt — are all permitted for reasons infinitely wise; but to trust him, she must also say, "Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne: mercy and truth shall go before thy face."

For if God is so good as to suffer no consequences of sin to enter the unseen world; if his mercy throws wide open heaven's gates alike to saint and sinner, must not that love lead him to stretch forth his almighty arm, and ward off from this sin-cursed world its misery and pain?

With what a throb of joy her own heart replied,—"The arm of the Infinite One has reached down to earth. 'God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son,' to redeem it from its heritage of sin and suffering; and if he has made the narrow way, leading back to the forfeited inheritance of glory, so

wide that 'whosoever will' may climb thitherward, need men murmur because God's revealed Word contains the inflexible decree, 'The soul that sinneth, it shall die,' or believe God's truth made void, when, through Christ, it became possible for him to 'be just, and yet the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus?'"

Could this faith be called "austere" with its divine Helper and Redeemer? How earnestly she longed to lead the weary soul beside her into the "green pastures" of his love; no less love because indissolubly connected with immutable justice.

The brief silence had given Miss Fielding courage, perhaps, for she said in low and broken tones, —

"Miss Fay, I want to become a Christian. Can I? Will you show me how?"

There was a sudden lighting up of the gray eyes, as Louise, with a quick gesture, placed her hand in the other's. The question was unexpected; but with a grateful thought sent upward to the Source of all truth went

also the humble petition that the Comforter himself would take of the things of Christ, and show them to that needy one.

"Dear Miss Fielding," she said at length, "it is to feel ourselves sinners, deserving of and already condemned to death, but who may, if willing, reach forth grateful hands, to accept the pardon freely offered by Him whose right it is, and humbly, penitently, unreservedly, give him in return all he asks, — ourselves."

"That can not be all?"

"I give you our Saviour's own words, 'Come unto me;' and, 'He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life.'"

"I read that last night. I was feeling my great guilt in his sight; my utter helplessness to atone for the past. I found many other precious promises, and I wanted to believe them; but I dared not. Isn't there something I must do first?"

"There are two things for us to do, repenting and believing; and I do not think that the precedence belongs invariably to either. Sometimes the heart will feel its guilt before

it reaches the foot of the cross, and then, with an overwhelming sense of relief, it rolls off its burden there; but, oh! when the anxious inquirer makes that the stereotyped way of being saved, and says, 'I can not feel my sins, and therefore can not come to Christ,' how I long to bid her go at once, obey Christ's other command, 'Believe,' and lay her heart just as it is at the Saviour's feet. I am so sure she would very soon know by glad experience how truly the goodness of God leadeth to repentance. But the repentance is already yours. What need hinder your believing? Will you please God by doubting his promises, by refusing the gift Christ's bleeding hands hold forth?"

"No, no, I want it, — I must have it; but to give him this useless life, to flee to him in the storm when I would not in the sunshine — oh, I dare not hope for any thing but reproach and scorn! The world, too, will say I have taken religion because all else failed. I used to say religion was well enough for old, burdened, wretched hearts for which life held no

farther brightness; and it really seemed to me that Christians were almost entirely of that class, — of the sad and sorrowful. Did it never seem so to you?"

"Why no, indeed. I think the greater part of the Christians I have known have been the happiest people in the world."

"I begin to see my own blindness, and that it was I who would not see how sorrow came to all, worldling as well as believer; but I did not mean that Christians were always sad and sorrowful, but that as a general thing they were those who have been denied worldly good, and have known what it was to suffer. I thought very likely no one ever chose to be religious till life offered nothing else to enjoy."

"I am sure it is not so," replied Louise, "but might not the reason why you thought of the suffering and believing together be this? Suppose you were following some one having a lighted lantern; you might not notice it while the daylight was all around you; but if you entered with him some dark and dangerous passage, how brightly its radiance would gleam

out on the darkness! Do we not see the rainbow most plainly when it is darkest? Thus far God has given me a very happy life, but I think my trust in him has hightened every joy; and so, without presumption I hope, I may trust that much more, when the storm comes, it shall prove an eternal refuge, for underneath me would be the everlasting arm."

"I am sure it would be so," replied Miss Fielding, clasping her friend's hand more tightly. "I never felt a Christian life as I have yours. You will hate me, but it angered me to see how religion made Leonard brave and patient to endure;" and a spasm of pain passed over her face. "I taunted him with the joy he had found, while I was growing more wretched every day, till I forced him never to mention the subject. Then I came to know you, — a life nearer what mine used to be, or rather what mine might have been. I saw you had chosen Christ, even while the world was giving you so much to enjoy. I began to watch you cautiously, wondering what you would be in my place, yet feeling in spite of

myself that the hidden source of your joy and peace was beyond the control of circumstances. I did not mean to tell you this, although I shall always bless you for what you have been to me; but oh! the storm found me without a refuge; how dare I hope God will hear my cry now?"

"Because he is God," replied Louise, with low-toned earnestness. "It may be in this very way he seeks to have you believe the words concerning himself, — 'Thou hast been a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat.'"

There was a pause, and then Miss Fielding asked, — "If it is true that such as I may believe that, what shall I do next, — how shall I begin to serve him?"

"He who serves us must also guide us. Ask him; ask in faith, nothing doubting. He has promised to make plain paths, but I think we must be content to watch them unfold day by day."

"But I have grown so irritable, so fretful,

[illegible]

[illegible] replied Louise:
[illegible] with
[illegible] world."

[illegible] hope I am
[illegible] better way." said
[illegible] Louise again
[illegible] I am that I can meet
[illegible] feeling I had a month ago. I

remember the beauty of which I was once so proud. There is little in those sallow cheeks and that disfigured face, but they do not trouble me now. I am looking at the heart, so much viler in God's sight, and I believe I want that cleansed from sin and guilt even more earnestly than ever I have desired to regain my good looks. Oh, God has not dealt with me one-half as bitterly as I deserved! Why have I questioned, why should I, though he bestow a thousand unmerited blessings upon others?"

"Remembering that what we know not now, we shall know hereafter," added Louise, raising her eyes for the first time to the glass.

The countenance reflected beside hers, when once before the two had stood there side by side, was still vividly impressed upon her mind, but the mirror no longer held its counterpart. A careless observer might not have seen the difference, for now, as then, the frightful scar disfigured the pale face; but Louise remembered the dissatisfied, restless, weary look of the one, saw the hopeful, yearn-

ing, restful peace of the other, — saw a new radiance in the dark blue eyes where then had lurked the shadows of unhappy discontent. Absorbed in this thought, she looked steadily into the mirror, but those eyes, full of their new-born luster, met her own with an unconscious gaze, as if they had withdrawn behind the glory so surely reflected from them. And Louise, half-unconsciously to herself, murmured, "'Moses wist not that his face shone.'"

"Did you speak?" asked Miss Fielding, rousing herself. For answer, Louise drew her away to the bedside, where they kneeled together in silent prayer.

When they arose, Louise picked up the forgotten slipper, but Miss Fielding took it from her, saying, "When the heart is light the headache is of little moment; and I hear the girls below. I thank you very much for staying at home; and you will pray for me, won't you? I am so weak."

Louise kissed her, and repeated those comforting words of the apostle, "We know whom we have believed, and are persuaded that he is

able to keep that which we have committed unto him," adding, "and that is our own weak selves, to be his for ever."

Then Kate's voice was heard calling, "Lou, Lou," and Louise ran hastily down-stairs.

CHAPTER VIII.

IN THE WORLD, AND NOT OF IT.

"The happy idleness of that sweet morn,
With all its lovely images, was changed
To serious musing and to self-reproach."

WORDSWORTH.

CHRISTMAS had come at last. Nature had changed her garb of somber gray for one of almost unparalleled magnificence. The day before the weather had been warm, accompanied by a steady drizzle of rain; but during the night the temperature sank very suddenly below zero, which enabled the good dame to don an apparel such as even her inexhaustible wardrobe seldom furnishes. Every tiny twig had grown to the stout proportions of a man's finger, and sparkled like a gem of the purest water. Every tree and shrub, every hillside and garden-wall, presented innumerable prisms or mirrors of ice, refracting or reflecting the dancing sunbeams to blinking eyes of blue,

gray, or brown, boasting an almost equal radiance of their own from the hearts warm with wishing "Merry Christmas" ever since the first streak of dawn had awakened them.

This was in the country, where sturdy little urchins ran to and fro over the incrusted grass, listening to its crisp rattle, and imagining it the "valley of diamonds," shouting themselves hoarse with Christmas greetings to later risers, or timorous six-year-old little ones, who shivered under the shelter of icicle-fringed piazzas, and gazed in open-mouthed wonder at the fairy-land which a twelve-hours' slumber had silently summoned around them.

It was different in the city; for there no sooner did the lamp-posts and window-frames begin to exhibit their newly-acquired gems, than over came the huge, black shadows of the opposite buildings and quietly forbade the display. Even when, by the merest accident, a bold little sunbeam darted suddenly aslant one roof less elevated than its neighbor, and succeeded, for a time, in brightening the glassy pavements, a shower of dirty ashes quickly ex-

tinguished all the prismatic hues, as well as stifled the grumbling of unwary pedestrians. And so Nature was fain to withdraw her wondrous kaleidoscope out to the wider range of fields, and leave art to beautify as she would the unpoetic town.

Right well did the latter acquit herself. Christmas garlands hung in the windows; Christmas bonbons built miniature palaces in the shop-windows; Christmas cheer garnished the markets; savory odors floated up from the basements into the faces of hatless and shoeless children, who snuffed and oh'd, and of portly gentlemen who hastened on with a smile of anticipation twitching their moustaches.

Not till sunrise that morning did Louise throw open the shutters towards the bit of country, not yet wholly metamorphosed by brick and stone, and with an exclamation of delight turn to Percy for sympathy. But the latter drew the soft blankets closer as the sharp air from the open window penetrated the room, and resumed her slumbers; so Louise, wrap-

ping a shawl around her, sat down to enjoy alone the glorious scene.

The gladness without found only an echo of gladness within. The mere fact of existence seemed enough to make one gratefully content, — to drink in long draughts of that invigorating atmosphere, and feel its stimulus to every mental and physical power, to let the eye linger with critical appreciation over each feature of the picture, glowing and palpitating in the light of that morning sun, and to feel that

"A thing of beauty is a joy for ever."

It was no wonder that, after the frosty air had obliged her to close the window, she still sat by it, her mind full of rose-colored fancies. Besides, every thing had contributed to her happiness for the last few weeks. That she herself had been necessary to the happiness of others had no small share in producing her present self-satisfied feeling, and, alas! self-complacency was taking cognizance of it. Every body had wanted Louise; Janet must have her opinion about Aunt Jennings' cap

and Uncle Paul's present. Mrs. Thorne had commisioned her to make all the purchases for Lawtie. Lawtie, on his part, had been continually whispering some important secret in "Lou's ear." Kate laid at her feet all the pleasure she had derived from her unusual industry; Uncle Paul had commended her for the good judgment shown in every plan for the domicil; Mrs. Lovejoy, besides the frequent consultations, had insisted, finally, on her spending an entire day helping her ornament the tree with its costly fruits; one afternoon had been given to assisting Charlie and Leonard to arrange a Christmas tree donated by Frank for the mission connected with D—— Street church; indeed, every day had been very busy and very happy, and she had written an enthusiastic account of the last few weeks to her mother, with the expression somewhere in it, — "So it is not always difficult to combine duty and happiness; it really seems as if I was being borne along on a current of pleasant usefulness."

When the experienced dealer tests with his

knuckle the fragile china, and listens for the genuine ring, how quickly he detects the secret fracture! No less easily did the mother's love miss in those gayly written words the low music of an humble and contrite heart, and with the thanksgiving, sent upward to Him who was bestowing upon the dear, absent one so many blessings, mingled the entreaty, "Keep, oh, keep her unspotted from the world!" And then the trembling fingers traced upon a bit of paper the words, "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall," and slipped it into the envelope already sealed over its message of loving counsel, ready to speed on its way from mother to daughter.

The letter reached Louise the day before Christmas, and being hastily opened in her own room, the tiny slip of paper had fallen unobserved to the floor, and lodged quite out of sight behind the bureau, its mission of tender admonition all unfulfilled. And so on that glad Christmas morning with the bright fancies crowding into her mind came Satan

also among them, not as the tempter, but as an angel of light, bidding her look over the long catalogue of her good deeds, ascribing the change in Miss Fielding to her faithful prayers and consistent life, and insinuating among his congratulations the whisper, "Now, after accomplishing so much for your Lord you may well ungird for a time this burdensome armor, and enter heartily into the festivities before you." And Louise, with the little paper lying dumb at her very feet, welcomed to her heart the pleasant-toned visitant, and, with her Bible unopened in her hand, dreamed away those precious morning hours till the half-hour bell before breakfast aroused Percy to begin a hasty toilet, and sent Louise to the library with a divided mind, to spend at the mercy-seat those few remaining moments. She had read only a few verses, however, when she heard Kate calling her, and leaving the book open she ran hastily out in answer.

Sad but too true was it, that she who but a few days before had spoken so earnestly of

the need of vigilance, had herself forgotten to watch, and needed, as the sleeping disciples, to hear the Master's chiding, — "Why sleep ye? watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation."

During all that busy mirthful day she could find no time to resume those interrupted devotions. Mrs. Lovejoy had postponed her entertainment, primarily intended for Christmas-eve, till that night, in order that her husband might reach home from a short business trip; but even with so much added time for preparation, there was "a host of odds and ends" to complete, and Uncle Paul insisted that they all should enjoy the ride which Jamie, the twins, and the happy mother were to take two or three miles out of town. Frank took Percy and Miss Seroy. It was Miss Fielding's wish that Louise should accompany Leonard and herself. Janet preferred to remain at home, which left Charlie and Kate by themselves; an arrangement to which neither of them objected.

Poor Janet! The one unpleasant ocurrence in the Christmas preparation, and which

we have neglected to mention, came in the shape of a severe disappointment to her, in which they all sympathized.

That day when Kate and Janet had been alone to the domicil, the latter immediately on their return had gone up to her studio, whither her cry of distress quickly summoned all the others, even catching Mrs. Doughty's ears, and adding a trifle more energy to her brisk steps.

Janet held up to them in silence her ruined picture, which she had found lying face downwards upon the carpet, the wet colors not only blended together and covered with lint, but the canvas soaked in the stream of water from the vase of flowers it had probably carried with it in its fall.

They looked blankly at each other a few moments, and then Kate, who was tired from her walk, cried nervously, remembering how very anxious Nettie had been to complete it in season for Christmas. Mrs. Doughty declared "it was no more than she expected; every thing had been running so slick she'd been

thinking 'twas about time for a smash-up; and they had better thank their stars it was nothing worse."

"How could it have happened?" exclaimed Janet, sinking into a chair, as the certainty of the misfortune forced itself upon her.

True, there was an open window, but as the easel stood, no sudden breeze from without could have done the mischief.

"It must have been Lawtie," said Miss Seroy; "he probably came in to look at it, and hit it accidentally; children are always so careless."

"He would have confessed it at once," said Louise, confidently.

"I am not so sure of that," was Miss Seroy's reply; "safely out of sight, it is not so difficult a matter for children to forget such things."

"I guess you haven't lived in the same house with that boy six years and over," said Mrs. Doughty, bluntly, "or you would know he doesn't belong to the sort of folks you seem to have been brought up amongst. When

he acts or tells a lie, I'll give up believing in truth."

Miss Seroy hastened out of the room.

"I should never think of Lawtie as the guilty one, if any such there be," said Janet, "but it is certainly mysterious how it could have happened."

"I do believe it was Prima Donna herself," said Kate, spitefully. "She knew it was to go finally to Mrs. Thorne, and she has always been as jealous as she could be, if any of us received a favor from that lady or offered one to her. Of course Frank would come into the same list, for she does not dream of Nettie's engagement to his cousin; and you know, Lou, she takes every possible opportunity to tell him how little any of us like music, and what a wretched player you are. I heard her a dozen times last night, and he had such a droll expression on his face, and never looked at you once. Any thing, I say, but running other people down, to lift yourself up."

Percy looked disturbed, and interrupted Kate to say, —

"But Prima Donna would never stoop to any thing like this. What an absurd idea!"

"It wouldn't be such a terrible bend to her spine, I assure you, my dear, and I do not like her, and couldn't, if she was covered with solid gold, and stuck full of diamonds. Bah! I don't mean to speak to her again," returned Kate energetically.

"But you have certainly condemned her rather hastily," interposed Louise; "do at least give her the benefit of judge and jury."

"Well, then," resumed Kate, "Mrs. Doughty shall be chief justice, and we five will fill the jury-box, while for witnesses we have the poor mutilated picture, the unmistakable evidence all our ears have acquired of the utter heartlessness of the accused, besides her distant connection with Jezebel; all of which will offer sufficient testimony for the case. Mrs. Doughty, please demolish her!"

Janet laughed with the others at Kate's fierce gestures.

"You must not mention such a thing out of this room, Kitty," she said. "It is not in the

least probable, and ought not to have entered our minds at all. It can not be helped, and I must submit with as good a grace as possible."

And so she did, only yielding to the depressing influence so far as to refuse to ride on Christmas day, but promising to join them at the domicil on their return; and Miss Seroy rode with Percy, who alone manifested any desire for her company.

We will leave the reader to imagine the speechless gratitude of Mrs. Myers, the vociferous delight of the twins, and Jamie's quieter, but no less grateful gladness, when they laid him, weary from his ride, on the comfortable lounge close by the window, where a few geraniums and verbenas invested the room with fragrance and beauty. We will only hint in passing, that Brigham's mother, under Mrs. Doughty's strict supervision, had the table nicely spread, and drew from the new stove-oven a piece of roasted beef, just as the merry company halted at the door; that, of course, they must all eat "just a mouthful," after Uncle Paul had asked the abiding presence of

the Father of all upon this new home; that Brigham, too, was there in all the glory of an entire new suit, his freckled face burning with a sense of its unusual cleanliness, and a doubt, quite novel in his experience, as to the proper location of his superfluous number of hands and feet; his eyes finding plenty of employment in wistful looks at the sheet wreathed with evergreen, put up tent-fashion, to conceal something from view, or in furtive glances at Janet, who sat near it resting from her rapid walk.

Lawtie wished "so much mamma would have come, and not cried at home all day," for he was never so happy in his life before. And indeed it was hardly possible for any one to carry an unhappy heart away from that humble home, with so many blessings from the widow and the fatherless following them. Even before Uncle Paul told them that if they knew how many other wretched homes and hearts along the dirty streets had been made brighter and lighter with the rest of Mrs. Thorne's bounty, they could not for a moment regret having ta-

ken upon themselves the greater part of Jamie's Christmas needs.

And again the tempter reiterated to the heart of Louise congratulations on her own sacrifices, and again she failed to recognize his voice. If only Uncle Paul had uttered aloud the words of the psalmist to which his own heart was keeping such joyous rhythm,—

"Not unto us, O, Lord! not unto us, but unto thy name give glory."

The next event in the day's proceedings was the Christmas dinner at home, to which Uncle Paul had been invited on account of Mrs. Jennings' absence from the city in search of health amidst the orange groves of her native state. Frank had taken the liberty to invite himself and the other two gentlemen, and the faces around that bountiful table were all wreathed in smiles, except when a little shadow came down with Lawtie from the darkened room above, dimming the sparkle of his eye, or was reflected from Frank's clouded brow.

We can not hope, and will not attempt, to do

justice by any description to the tasteful embellishments of Mrs. Lovejoy's drawing-rooms, or the crowd of gallantry and beauty filling them that evening, nor even to notice the costumes of our particular acquaintances, except to observe that the conservatory had furnished all their ornaments, and that Louise had gathered and arranged them for each. For the first time, too, the quaint moral truths which the old gardener always threw in with his bouquets had seemed to her malapropos and tiresome, but then, she was so excited it was little wonder. And during the evening so wholly did the gayety around her engross her mind that she vouchsafed only an abstracted smile to Kate's aside, as they passed each other in a promenade, "I wonder how Jamie and Brigham are enjoying their Christmas-tree."

It would be quite as useless to attempt any enumeration of the presents which at a later hour fell to each one's portion. Outwardly that was only a continuation of what had been as pleasant as possible before, but of course

there must be some of the inevitable envyings, heart-burnings, and disappointments hidden under smiling faces and honeyed words. But on the other hand, there were glad surprises and grateful acknowledgements not a few. Uncle Paul might have sat for a picture of St. Nicholas himself as they filled his arms with small and bulky articles and then covered his head with an elegantly embroidered smoking-cap, the gift of Mrs. Lovejoy, not needed, she knew, to exclude the fumes of the vile weed from the few silvery hairs it would cover, but to prevent the cool morning blasts from taking advantage of the head old Time had been so ill-mannered as to leave unprotected. Uncle Paul enjoyed it all as heartily as little "Bub" Lovejoy, standing beside him, hugging his new drum and rocking-horse; and Louise forgot the momentary vexation with which she perceived the silver goblet, presented to him by Miss Seroy, and the netted scarf from herself hanging side by side, when she found her own name on an elegant stereoscope containing some two hundred views. It could not have

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come from Uncle Paul; she had already exhausted her vocabulary of appreciative adjectives over his gift of a large engraving. Kate laughed, denied any positive knowledge, and thought it might be Miss Seroy ; but Louise had recognized the latter's hand-writing in a showily-bound book she had just placed beside the engraving, and as the other gifts came to hand she was obliged to give up her search for the donor.

"Only look," whispered Percy, showing a fruit-knife marked with her own and Prima Donna's initials, "it could not have cost one-half so much as the handkerchief I gave her, and I might have saved so much towards mother's dress; she has given Janet that superb card-receiver, and Kate the most exquisite cameo bracelet."

"Perhaps she acted on your own principle," said Louise, coolly, and Percy walked away in additional ill-humor.

She had anticipated such a rich harvest of gifts, she could hardly fail of being disappointed, but it did seem as if every body had

chosen the plainest things possible. Louise, on the contrary, had been too busy to bestow much thought upon the matter any way, and was quite overcome at the kindness of her new friends, especially when she found the traveling-bag, with "Miss Fielding's grateful remembrance."

Oh, would not even that lead her thoughts, as every trifling pleasure was wont to do, to Him from whom cometh every good and perfect gift! Would she have answered Percy in so unsympathizing a manner if the tempter had not been by?

A pretty set of pearls "from Kate" was handed her next, which of course served to release the latter from suspicion as to the stereoscope, although Frank, to whom she referred Louise, said that he heard Kate say something about a stereoscope's being a suitable present for somebody, but that as he did not always understand remarks aright, especially on the subject of gifts, she had better prosecute her inquiries elsewhere; and Kate laughed, but did not quite understand all of

Frank's remark, or the blush of embarrassed feeling with which Louise received it.

There were some other sober faces in the company besides Percy's; hearts heavy with similar disappointments. Uncle Paul must have noticed them, for he said to Leonard, who happened to be standing near him, as they were dispersing from around the tree, "I am afraid this gift-making is not on the right principle, yet."

"Very certainly not," was the reply, "if the same rule should guide us in it which Christ gave his disciples for feast-making, — 'Call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsman, nor thy rich neighbors; lest they also bid thee again, and a recompense be made thee;' not, I suppose, to forbid us from entertaining our friends, or even our acquaintances, who happen to have plethoric pocket-books; but laying down a worthy principle to prevent selfishness from undermining even our hospitality. Why should that same unworthy motive undelie so much of our generosity?"

"That some may bestow gifts with thoughts

of the recompense is possible, but I do not like to believe it," said Uncle Paul. Fortunately, Percy was not within hearing. "I was not thinking of that; but in the matter of giving to those we love, do we consider the needs and longings of those we care less about? Did not Christ say, 'Love one another as I have loved you'? and if we should apply that to the subject in hand, must we not remember that our Saviour did not use his healing, helping power in behalf of his personal friends any sooner than he did for the veriest stranger?"

"Mary, whom he loved, *sent* for him in her trial, while the widow of Nain received her son unsolicited, from the embrace of death," replied Leonard, his eye kindling as he caught the half-expressed idea, "but our feelings rather dictate an opposite course, do they not? We would offer the best to the dearest; and I am not sure I could quite indorse a contrary plan, as yet."

"Certainly not, if the dearest need it; but if not, why isn't it a rare chance for self-sacrifice? Now, look here; much as I prize these

gifts for the love they express, wouldn't I rather see poor Miss Tomlinson, over there, who seldom gets an invitation into such a circle, because she must labor with her own hands since her father died, — wouldn't I rather see her looking joyous, with her hands as full as mine, than to note her wretched attempts at being glad over that forlorn-looking writing-desk and one volume of Dickens, with the thousand and one wants at home unsupplied? Of course I would, and so the sacrifice would have been altogether on the part of the givers of these beautiful things; and I dare say, in nine cases out of ten, the receiver would feel as I do."

"Very likely; but society, and individuals too, would need remodeling throughout, to apply such principles."

"Is not that what our religion professes to do?" returned Uncle Paul more earnestly, "and doesn't the church forget that, when she patterns after the world?"

"Have you forgotten you are not in a prayer-meeting?" asked Mrs. Trahammon, in

her blandest tone, and tapping Uncle Paul affectedly with her fan.

"I trust I am not found any where whither Christ can not accompany me," he answered, with his sunshiny smile.

"Of course not," she returned, displaying the costly lace on her handkerchief to the best advantage; "we read that he went to the wedding in Cana."

"And people never tire of quoting his example in that respect," said Leonard, "but we do not hear them speak quite as often of his nights of prayer, and days of self-sacrificing toil."

Mrs. Trahammon cast an indignant look at the young man, over which was spread her sweetest smile, like a thin coating of sugar.

"Oh! You young beginners are so fierce; you are always going to set yourselves completely out of the world; but I do not believe the world was made in vain, or its pleasures either; and why has not a church-member the same right to enjoy both that the world has?" and she turned an expression towards Uncle Paul which had the sweetness stirred in.

"He has an equal right to enjoy whatever is harmless in its aim and tendency," replied Mr. Jennings, "except as it takes him from other and nobler work God has bade him accomplish. You remember the Master said of himself, 'Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?' He who was Lord of all came not among us to enjoy whatever earth had to offer of pleasure, but to seek and save that which was lost; and by example, as well as word, bade his followers work while the day lasts. We Christians haven't time for all the world pursues, Mrs. Trahammon."

"But surely we ought to be able to combine some pleasure with duty."

"Most certainly; there is a vast element of pleasure in the very toil itself," he answered, with a smile that told he spoke from experience.

"But I mean of the worldly pleasures so called. I am sure it is no more than right to mingle a little of that with our self-denial;" and a little sigh corroborated the truthfulness of her mournful expression.

"The world in *its* affairs doesn't find such a union politic, unless it strictly adheres to its maxim, 'Duty before pleasure;' and the millennium will not be far off, when the children of light show a similar earnestness in the service of their Master."

"Excuse me, but there is a friend I have not yet spoken with;" and the smiling lady moved gracefully away.

Uncle Paul looked around, and Leonard made room for him on the sofa where he was sitting with Miss Fielding; a situation which commanded a view of both rooms, in one of which merry feet were already keeping time to lively music. Percy had entirely regained her good-nature, with the aid of Frank's lively sallies, and they were now among the dancers. Louise stood chatting merrily with a group of three or four quite near them, and Uncle Paul heard Percy say to her, as they whirled past, "What a pity you can't dance, Lou; it is so delightful;" and he was sorry to see that Louise allowed herself to be considerably disturbed by the remark. A little while after, he noticed

a young man, the son of one of the millionaires of K—— who had that evening been introduced to Louise, come hurriedly up to her, and say persuasively,—

"I am sure you dance, Miss Fay. Do oblige me."

She *did* dance; for when quite a child, a wealthy relative, during frequent visits to the old farmhouse, had bestowed much attention upon that point of the child's education; and till within a few years it had been her favorite pastime. Neither was she unaware that the young man waiting her answer was evidently considered the most desirable partner in the room; and the venom of Percy's tone was still rankling in her heart.

She took his arm, and they passed on to their places.

Uncle Paul sighed; and a little "oh dear!" like a plaintive echo, made him turn around, to find Kate at his elbow.

Not at all supposing that the little episode which had just occurred attracted her atten-

tion, he asked, cheerily, "What's the matter, Puss?"

"Oh, nothing much, only I've lost my polar-star, and must drift out to sea again."

He did not understand her, but Leonard did; for he had been watching her earnest look fastened upon Louise, and bending forward, he whispered in her ear, "It will not do to make frail humanity our polar-star, but you need not drift into the dangerous sea again; Christ says, 'Follow me.'" Kate was gone in a moment; only tossing back a saucy "I shall do as I please," over her shoulder.

And Uncle Paul, Leonard, and Miss Fielding talked of other things till Mr. Vose led Louise, flushed and smiling, back to them, and left her with a polite bow.

Miss Seroy was standing near, and turned to Louise with a sarcastic smile and tone. "Somebody declined going to Mrs. Trahammon's on account of the dancing, I believe, or at least, professed not to relish such dissipation."

"But it is entirely different, to-night," said Louise, her eyes still sparkling with excitement. "Don't you think so, Uncle Paul, — a great difference?"

Mr. Jennings did not answer, but Miss Seroy did.

"I am sure *I* see none; unless it be in one's motives and desires."

"I never thought dancing sinful in itself," continued Louise.

"Nor I," rejoined Miss Seroy, in a tone Louise did not quite relish, as the asperity of her next remark plainly evinced.

"And in the present company, on an occasion like this, I can see no harm in it."

"Neither do I," assented Miss Seroy, "only I think church-members ought to be labeled;" and she walked away very indifferently.

"How provoking she was!" said Louise, growing more excited as she met Leonard's reproving glance. "Do you think dancing sinful in itself, Uncle Paul?" He shook his head, but the look in his eye said, That has nothing to do with the matter; and she continued:

"Do you think it wrong for a Christian,—for me, to indulge in it, under circumstances like the present?"

"'If meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend,'" said Uncle Paul quietly; "and allowing, that we must use 'ifs,' it is better to have them on the safer side, with the apostles."

"Am I to blame because any one chooses to stumble over my *seeming* inconsistencies?" asked Louise impatiently.

"Was it he whose willing sacrifice the Lord had accepted, who asked, 'Am I my brother's keeper?'" said Uncle Paul, in so low a tone that none but herself could hear the reproof.

She turned away from him half angrily, and the look of surprised inquiry from Miss Fielding did not tend to lessen her irritation. She passed hastily into the conservatory, where, hidden by a large acacia-tree, she tried to debate the matter with herself; but of course, in her present mood, the proportions of right and wrong only grew more distorted

and indefinable; and there Frank found her, soon after, mechanically picking in pieces the bouquet given her by himself in the early part of the evening.

"I hope you will not be so merciless to the donor," he said, smiling at her sudden start. "I want your hand so very much for the last dance; now do not refuse me, or I shall really believe you are prejudiced against the individual."

Could the tempter have offered a more persuasive plea, or given him better advantage than her present unsettled state of mind?

Certain it was that Frank carried his point, and that he nodded very significantly to Janet, as they passed her on their way to the dancers.

After the dance he introduced her to a circle of his acquaintances, the very elite of fashionable society in R——; and Louise, not unmindful of the discomfiture and heart-burnings Prima Donna and Percy were probably experiencing, suffered her excitement to quite overcome her usual reserve, and very soon became

the center of this witty and accomplished group.

And when, in the gay conversation that followed, she felt rather than understood the slighting allusions made to the religion she had been taught to consider dearer than life itself, only a deeper crimson mantled the cheeks of the young Christian girl. None but Frank knew that she who was among them was not *of* them, or politeness would have checked the sneers and open ridicule that was then cast upon those who pretended to be better than others; and her downcast look did not perceive the flash of triumph in his eye, as he watched her, standing with averted face but silent tongue; no word of tender reproof to those who must one day meet at God's bar; no avowal of love or allegiance to the despised Galilean.

But how could she have spoken either? Did not her Lord reprove those who honored him with their lips, when their hearts were far from him?

An hour later, the girls were all in their own rooms untwisting the withered garlands from their hair, and giving into memory's keeping all that remained of the bright blossoms of anticipation with which they had so long delighted themselves. And, as it must ever be on earth, they were few and sober-hued, in comparison with their promise.

"Well, I must say you acted very much like other people, to-night," said Percy, as she laid her white gloves carefully in the scented box, her gift from Louise. "Frank said it would not take long for you to become quite a belle; and altogether, it has been quite an agreeable evening, although I don't quite like these half and half affairs; and I was dreadfully provoked about my presents. Strange, persons can never have any thing just to suit them; and then to-morrow morning every body will be so sleepy and cross. But I'd like to go every night, and never do any thing else but dance and be admired; and I guess it would not be such a disagreeable thing to you, either. Who would have thought a month ago that you

would have been tripping the light fantastic toe at such a rate?"

Louise did not answer; but her own heart echoed Percy's last question, as she stooped to search for the little pearl pin, which had just slipped from her fingers. She found it lying under the bureau, and close beside it the bit of paper, patiently biding its time. It was not difficult for Louise to recognize the cramped, old-fashioned, but dear hand-writing, nor for its reproof to probe her heart to the very quick, as she held it towards the light and read it.

"Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."

Percy had not observed her movements, and was not a little startled when her added question, "Won't it seem dull to go back to the old farmhouse?" was answered by Louise with a burst of tears and the words sobbed bitterly out, — "No, no; I wish I was there this moment; only to think how I have fallen!"

In vain Percy tried to comfort her by saying it was only the reaction; nothing but what a good sleep would set all right. In vain she re-

peated the argument Louise had herself used that evening of the harmlessness of dancing. The other only said, sadly, "It may be, in itself, but oh! it was so wrong for me."

"I can't see why," replied Percy, "nor how it could be any more sinful than to have talked or sung all the evening; do tell me, if you can."

"I can not *tell* you," was the mournful reply, "but I can *feel* it, oh, how bitterly! I know it did my own soul wrong; it made me grieve and dishonor my Saviour, and oh! what may it not have done to other souls, for whom that Saviour died!"

Percy soothed, scolded, and laughed by turns. Louise only wept the more, and when at last they knelt together for silent prayer, as had ever been their custom, the minds of both were too much excited to form a connected petition. The mere going through with the form was always a salvo to Percy's conscience, but it brought no sense of relief to Louise. She felt as if she had forfeited all claim to the privilege. After so much unusual excitement, her dis-

tress of mind easily induced bodily suffering almost bordering on convulsions, till Percy was half inclined to summon Mrs. Doughty: but naturally very self-reliant, she first began to test the soothing power of cold water and such sedatives as were at hand, and after a time had the satisfaction of seeing Louise yield to a sleep which complete exhaustion was forcing upon her. For some time after she continued to bathe her hands and head; for Percy, when not trammeled by the claims of fashion or position, could offer as friendly a heart or hand as trouble often finds; and then leaving the gas burning dimly, she crept softly into bed, saying to herself, as she listened to her friend's irregular breathing,—"It is not so easy a thing after all to serve God and mammon together. I wish I could make up my own mind. I can't say I am willing to take the world for all in all; nor am I willing to give it up wholly and make Christ all. I don't suppose Mrs. Trahammon is at all troubled about herself, or could conceive what Lou has suffered to-night; but I do believe it

is because mammon has so large a share of her heart that the other bit doesn't dare say a word. I wonder if God cares any thing for such kind of Christians? It seems as if the world could serve him just as well, and save the fuss of a dividing line; only I don't think there would be so very much work done for him; and there isn't now by such folks. Heigho! I wish I could go to sleep myself. I wish I could believe in Mrs. Trahammon's kind of religion, for I don't quite want to become one of the other kind just yet. Perhaps Mrs. Trahammon carries it too far. I won't be so particular as Louise, to be half-killed with remorse for a little sin, nor as bad as Mrs. Trahammon, who doesn't see any sin in any thing she wants to do. I wonder if that Mr. Vose has any larger income than Frank. He isn't half so good-looking any way. I wonder if Louise cares very much for that same Mr. Frank." And so Percy's thoughts wandered to other things, — the people whose elegant dress she had envied that evening, and how she would surpass them if she had but the

means; what a great sensation she would make in society, if wealth and position could only become hers. Such thoughts were always mesmeric to her, but that night she could not help seeing, through every bright fancy, the little card in her writing-desk, and the words Uncle Paul had written thereon, —

"What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?"

CHAPTER IX.

WHAT IT COSTS.

"That soul,
Which with the motion of a virtuous act
Flashes a look of terror upon guilt,
Is, after conflict, quiet as the ocean
By a miraculous finger stilled at once."

"Would you judge of the lawfulness or unlawfulness of pleasure, take this as a rule: Whatever weakens your reason, impairs the tenderness of your conscience, obscures your sense of God, or takes away the relish of spiritual things, that is sin to you, however innocent it may be in itself."

SLEEP did not remove the burden, as Percy predicted, from the mind of Louise, but the hour she spent alone in the library the following morning lightened it in a great measure. That, however, was known only to God and herself, for when the girls next met around the dinner-table, they were busy discussing the particularly enjoyable parts of the previous evening, the variety of the presents, and Mrs. Lovejoy's admirable fitness as a hostess. Nothing was said of her own inconsistent conduct, as Louise hoped

there might be, to give her an opportunity of expressing her regret and subsequent repentance. Most of the petty dissatisfactions, and envyings too, had faded away with the past; for else would society find it hard to chain its votaries, to such continued service. Happy will it be when people make as little of disagreeables mingling with their Christian duties. That day was Saturday, and when Miss Seroy declared herself thankful that Sunday was just at hand, for then they could sleep the entire day, no one raised a dissenting voice; even Louise bent over her plate with a consciousness that she, of all others, could least reprove the remark. When the morrow came they all acted upon Prima Donna's suggestion except Louise, who, after having relieved her full heart by pouring her penitent confession into Uncle Paul's sympathizing ears during their walk to church, listened with tearful interest to the sermon from the words, — "If the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?"

Was not the lesson especially for her?

Christians were not to war after the flesh; they were to see that the weapons of their warfare were not carnal; but, besides this, they must endeavor to enlist others on the side of God and truth. If the world saw them dallying with the foe, holding parley as to the extent and vantage ground of their separate possessions, would it believe the warfare of such vital importance, — a contest whose issues involved the eternal destiny of each immortal soul?

Such words as these served to deepen the reproaches of her own conscience, but the faithful pastor also made mention of Him to whom belongeth mercies and forgiveness; and his tender message to repentant souls brought back to Louise much of her old light-heartedness, tempered now with a healthy self-distrust.

"What a great fuss about such a little matter!" exclaimed Percy, when in their own room Louise had been telling her of the sermon. "I should like to know how much sin there was in your dancing, any way: just tell

me right out and out why it is wrong for Christians to dance."

"I would rather state the question in this way," said Louise, smiling, "why I think it wrong for *me* to dance because I *am* a Christian. It seems to me that dancing belongs to the world exclusively, and that the Christian must meddle with it at his peril. Even the world itself considers it unseemly for him. Then, too, it is one of those seductive pleasures, every taste of which creates an appetite for more, till it becomes well nigh impossible to resist its cravings; and all such ought certainly to be avoided by those who have professed to set their affections on things above. And its only really plausible defense — that of being a healthy exercise — avails nothing when such exercise is taken in the crowded ball-room and during the late night hours, and how many care for it elsewhere? Besides, almost always, as in my own case, it opens the way to so many other sins."

"But every one needs some recreation, and for that, I think a Christian might dance as

well as other people; he can't always be praying or preaching."

"No, but you would say a soldier off duty ought still to avoid all that might tend to disable him from service; and besides, a good soldier does not have his eye on whatever ease or pleasure he can contrive to find by the way; he is ever looking at the final triumph, the victorious end of all his toil and suffering. His rest and rejoicing is to come then; to the Christian warrior it will be the 'fullness of joy, and pleasures forever more.'"

"But that is so vague, so far off; how can one help looking at and preferring the attractions all about us so close at hand."

"But all these attractions have 'pin-pricks,' Percy; even Kate has found that out."

"One gets over them in a little while," returned Percy, whirling slowly round before the glass, to see if everything about her becoming toilet was satisfactory, "and the next thing looks just as bright, you know."

"Yes, through Satan's rose-colored spectacles; and we are willing again and again to

learn by experience that he is 'a liar,' but when the eyes of our faith have been opened by Christ himself, we begin to realize that his exceeding great and precious promises have present as well as future fulfillment."

Percy did not answer; and Louise, re-arranging her hair for dinner, began singing in a low voice the words of the anthem chanted in church that day, "Thine eyes shall see the King in his beauty: they shall behold the land that is very far off." There were callers in the evening, but Louise did not go down. She wanted a quiet talk with Miss Fielding, and went to her room for that purpose.

There was an embarrassing silence after the first few common-place remarks, but that did not deter her from the very frank confession for which she had come. It was as she feared: the light of her Christian example had not been dimmed on Christmas evening without hindering the feebler steps of her who was as yet weak in faith. Miss Fielding acknowledged having struggled against doubts and fears ever since; almost persuaded, yet unwilling to be-

lieve religion only a pleasant delusion, which even to Louise was only a secondary matter, after all. But that it was not a secondary matter to the latter was very evident during the whole of the long conversation following, while, from the humble trust manifested by her who having sinned had sought forgiveness at the throne of grace, Miss Fielding was encouraged to hope she too might "obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need," and when again they kneeled together by the bedside, it was not for silent prayer. Miss Fielding, with broken utterance, laid herself, her "useless life," her wayward heart, at her Saviour's feet.

Was there not joy in heaven that night? and had not those two hearts a foretaste of its blessedness as they went to their rest?

When Percy came up two or three hours later, she paused involuntarily beside Louise, noting how peacefully she slept, her lips just parted in a smile, and her breathing as tranquil as a child's upon its mother's breast. "Quite a contrast from the scene of the other night," she thought, as she again stole careful-

ly into bed from fear of disturbing her. "It is soon over with, I'm thinking; a sorrow not very lasting. However, I do not believe she will be caught again, whether it was wrong or not; and I hope she won't, for more reasons than one."

But it was not all "over with" yet. Louise felt that very sensibly, as the days passed by without bringing her an opportunity to speak of it to the other girls, or to Frank, before whom she felt she had most dishonored her Lord. But the opportunity came at last, when the latter gave her an invitation to the theater one morning just as their practice-hours were concluded. She was not sorry, although her face became crimson, and her trembling lips could only stammer the courteous but plain refusal.

"One must certainly be pardoned for deeming Miss Fay rather capricious, to say the least," he returned, with a proud curl of his handsome lip.

Her voice was low but very firm then: —

"I have given you sad occasion for thinking

me so, Mr. Knowlton, for thinking me worse than capricious, — an inconsistent Christian. Think what you will of me, but I beg of you not to let the error of my weak unguarded heart make you think less of the religion whose precepts I profess to follow."

"It certainly does not commend that religion to me to find its bars and fences hemming in its followers from all enjoyments so closely that only occasionally they can jump over, in order to relish a bit of the world's freedom outside," he replied with his most fascinating smile.

"And yet it is true that God's children leave 'green pastures and still waters' in exchange for the brambles and briers of the roadside, whenever their sinful hearts lead them into forbidden paths," returned Louise, growing bold in her earnestness. "I would give much to recall those acts of mine the other evening, that seemed to speak otherwise; but if once you knew the Shepherd's love, Mr. Knowlton, you would understand that it is

his followers alone who ought to boast of their freedom."

He turned away half-angrily at this unexpected personal appeal, but in a moment resumed his former persuasive manner.

"Please give me a practical illustration of that same freedom to-night, Miss Lou. It is a very common thing to see Christians at the theater now; so just put away those troublesome scruples, only inherited, I dare say, and for once act your natural self. You know how much your company will gratify us all, and I will agree to think whatever you please of your religion, yourself, and even your mistaken idea of having committed an unpardonable sin on Christmas eve."

She fastened the gray eyes steadily upon him, and asked abruptly, —

"Do you think it a proper place for Christians, Mr. Knowlton?"

The sudden question disconcerted him. He could not avoid it, with those earnest eyes reading an answer already in his own, and

so, out of an inner love of truth, answered frankly, —

"No; at least not if all they profess to believe and expect is true, which I am still far from crediting, and, judging from appearances, they often more than half doubt it themselves."

"And I have added to the inconsistencies which give the world occasion to say that," she replied sadly; "and now how can I convince you of the joy and strength of my hope in Christ? But one thing is true. The fountain of God's love is ever flowing freely, whether the pilgrim bathes continually in its purifying waters, or lingers with foolish desire beside the muddy rills of earth. But these last never satisfy my thirst, nor yours. Will you not seek for yourself the water of life?"

His thoughts seemed to have wandered very far away, and his reply was rather to them than to her.

"Yes, there is something strange about this religion. I have seen that myself; but," recovering himself with an apparent effort, "I do not want to meddle with it. There is

too much about it one can not understand. Something necessary for us to know would not have been above our comprehension."

She laid her hand lightly upon his. "Can you comprehend that piece of mechanism, or why and how it obeys so unhesitatingly our unspoken will? Hasn't nature many mysteries which we can not fathom? and yet the facts are so plainly before us that we know they are real. There may be many things about God's character and government hidden from our dull vision, but surely he has made the way of redemption so plain that even the child just learning to say 'Our Father who art in heaven' may trust himself to the love which forgiveth sin for Christ's sake."

"I am sorry we can have no sympathy on this point," he said coldly, and reaching for his hat, "I do not care to argue the matter; and of course, should not urge you, against your will, to accompany us to-night. With two lessons, my presumption ought to be quite cured."

Louise and Miss Fielding spent the evening alone, for Frank took Miss Percy to the theater,

and the others went with the Trahammon clique.

But Louise was sure she had decided wisely, if Mrs. Trahammon did call her puritanical. If this same religion had been worth so much to those brave-hearted puritans, that they dared face danger, — even death, by sea or land, rather than relinquish it, were not her present sacrifices very insignificant, in comparison?

Of course, she could not help noticing Percy's air of triumph when they all went off, the next night, to the opera, without saying a word to her, but in the regret which, for a moment, she was tempted to indulge, she recognized the tempter's voice, and as she lifted her heart in silent prayer she realized the truth of the promise, "I will help thee, saith the Lord, and thy Redeemer."

And in that, too, was probably the secret of the strength which enabled her to speak to the girls, the next morning, at the breakfast table, after Mrs. Doughty had left the room. No one could doubt her sincerity as she reminded Miss Seroy of the deserved rebuke she had so

ungraciously received from her on Christmas evening, and expressed the sorrow she had since felt, for the occasion there had been for it.

Miss Seroy very politely disclaimed any need of apology; and Louise was too grateful for her own relief of mind, to notice Janet's scornful remark about 'the unnecessary display of sanctity.' Neither did she observe the happy lighting-up of Kate's eye, and was quite unprepared therefore for the affectionate way in which the latter threw her arms upon her neck, when they met on the stairs a little while afterwards, and very much surprised to hear her say, "I am going with you to the prayer-meeting to-night, mayn't I?—it is so terribly dull at home, when we don't go out."

"Oh, will you?" exclaimed Louise. "You know Uncle Paul is out of town, and I thought I should have to stay at home, not feeling quite like venturing alone."

They went, and Louise thought it an unusually interesting meeting, there was so much warmth of heart manifested by each speaker

Leonard joined them at the door and accompanied them home. He spoke of his pleasure at seeing Kate there, to which the latter replied, with a doleful shrug of her shoulders, "I am glad if somebody was pleased, for I'm sure *I* wasn't; the seats were so hard I am almost tired to death; and that terribly long prayer, to begin with, used me up for the evening; and then the old woman with that big black bonnet just in front of me made me so nervous with her queer way of singing through her nose, I couldn't enjoy the hymns one bit; and if Lou hadn't looked so grave, I should have laughed when the black man told his 'sperience;' I wanted to punch her, but my poor shoulders gave another twinge at their unusual perpendicularity, and set me to wondering when it would ever be through. Oh dear! say, Louise, truly, did you enjoy being there?"

"I certainly did, very much," was the reply; "and I never realized so forcibly the proof it is of the truth and divinity of the Scriptures, that the religion they teach inspires every tongue with a similar song of grateful praise,

fills every heart with the same humble trust and confidence through forgiven sin, despite all differences of intellect, learning, or position. These may be aids, necessary and acceptable, in God's sight, for the greater usefulness of his people; but unlike man, he 'accepteth not the persons of princes, nor regardeth the rich more than the poor, for they all are the work of his hands.'"

Kate's only answer was a deep-breathed sigh.

"Would you expect to find much pleasure in a company of foreigners, Kitty," asked Leonard, "all of whom spoke a language entirely unknown to yourself? Would you be able to judge whether or not the theme was interesting; and can not you explain your present dissatisfaction in a like manner?"

"I dare say," she replied carelessly, "and must learn to keep among my own kith and kin for the future."

"Can you not rather make relatives of those whose citizenship is in heaven, who are children of the Most High, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ?"

"There is something I don't exactly like, any more than Nettie," continued Kate, without noticing his question, "in the idea that you are all sailing by us so grandly in a sort of life-boat, sure of landing in safe quarters, and mercilessly consigning us outsiders sitting comfortably on the beach to eternal burnings."

"You have seen the Giant's Pitcher, in the ledge near my home, from the view on the foot-bridge?" he asked.

Kate nodded assent.

"And you have noticed its completely altered appearance when you stood on its left hand by the old quarry?"

"Yes, and I suppose you mean that the view of this other matter, taken by you on board, is entirely different from ours who are still enjoying ourselves on the land."

"Not exactly, but if ever you become a Christian, Kitty, I think you will then view the matter in a very different aspect; that your present position is on board a sinking vessel, rather than upon terra firma; and you will have known the feeling with which a person in

that situation welcomes the life-boat which only Christ can be to the perishing sinner."

Kitty withdrew her arm from his, and walked rapidly in advance of them, complaining of the cold, which of course put an end to conversation with her. Neither did she offer to accompany Louise to any more prayer-meetings, or accept her invitations to do so. And indeed, cards for soirees and sociables presented themselves so frequently, besides the lectures and concerts, that she could hardly find time for serious thought even were she so inclined.

But Louise, with all her desire to improve the unusual opportunity of hearing famous men and noted musicians, with her books and music so fully occupying her time at home, never forgot that recent experience. It was ever at hand like a faithful sentinel; and in this way she wrote to her mother; —

"I am learning slowly the minute watchfulness necessary to the faithful Christian, and a new meaning to the words, 'Seek ye *first* the kingdom of God.' I enjoy my evenings abroad as well as ever; but when the question arises

how far I can consistently comply with the demands of society, my desires for mental culture and the gratification of my tastes in general, that answer satisfies me best, 'Seek ye *first*.' So long as I am sure Christ is uppermost in my affections, to do his will my first and chief endeavor, then I may hope I am also doing other things for his glory, even to the eating and drinking. You will recognize the sentiment of your last letter, dear mother. I am only repeating my lesson like a dutiful child, and you can not think what a safeguard from evil is the thought, I know that my mother is praying for me; and in connection with this, the other night I felt, as never before, how strange it is that we, Christ's followers, can ever forget his requests, disobey his commands, or slight his ordinances, in the face of that wondrous truth, 'He ever liveth to make intercession for us.'"

CHAPTER X.

TRIED WITH FIRE AND WITHOUT.

"And what is faith, love, virtue, unassayed,
Alone, without exterior help sustained?"
MILTON.

"There in our Father's house we sing
The song too sweet for mortal ears;
Sorrow and sighing all are past,
And pain and death are fled at last."

JAMIE was not neglected after Christmas, by either Louise or Kate. The latter, too, became a great favorite with Bridget Hale, who declared such a "lively pritty leddy was better nor the sunshine to a house;" and Kate, appreciating such complimentary remarks, seldom visited Jamie without extending her walk to Brigham's dingy abode. She often told Uncle Paul on her return that if all the virtues were as easy to practice as she had found that of benevolence, she should dare indulge the hope of becoming as good as himself; but it seemed to be the only one of Lou's peculiarities she cared

to pattern after. She did not relish the queer expression with which he listened, and thought he might have the goodness to say what modesty forbade her to, — that in the frequency of her visits and beneficence of her donations she already far exceeded Louise; but was obliged to content herself with wondering what he could mean by that occasional remark, "The fire shall try every man's work, of what sort it is."

One night they were anticipating the finest concert of the season, and, for a wonder, were all ready, and waiting in the parlor, before the arrival of their escorts. A loud outcry in the kitchen made them start up in alarm, and hurried them all to the basement stairs. They had just recognized Brigham's voice, talking very excitedly to Joanna, when Charlie's call, "Where are you, girls? we shall be late," hastened them all back again, except Louise, who stopped to inquire what was the matter. Brigham appeared in sight, a pitiful looking object, his tears still flowing freely, having traced grimy courses down his cheek; his hair tangled and matted, without any protection

whatever; and his hands, red and cold, clasping and unclasping with nervous rapidity. A fresh burst of grief prevented his answer to Louise's kind inquiry, and Joanna explained that he said his mother was dying; and he wanted somebody to go back with him. As near as she could make out, it was Kate his mother had asked to see.

"Yes, yes," sobbed the child, "'tis her, the bonny lady, she wants to come; oh! tell her to come quick, for there's nobody at all to spake a word to my poor mother, and she a dyin'; and father's only Mike Hale, to-night, — the more shame to him."

Grasping his soiled hand, Louise hurried towards the parlor in quest of Kate. She met them all in the dining-room, coming impatiently in search of herself; and telling Brigham's sad story in as few words as possible, she added, with tears in her eyes, "Oh! if Uncle Paul were only at home; but I'll go with you, Kate, and ——"

"As if I should lose the musical treat we expect to-night for any such foolish errand!"

rejoined Kate. "The good woman is half-frightened to death, I suppose, because she is a little ill; such persons always are. Come, Brigham, stop crying, and I'll bring your mother something nice to-morrow."

The boy only burst into more passionate sobs: "She an't goin' to be there to-morrow, 'cause the doctor said so; oh, I can't never go back alone; maybe she's gone now; oh dear, do please go, and mabbe you could help her git well."

"The idea!" exclaimed Kate, impatiently. "She was well and strong last week, and it is not at all probable she can be so near dying; father says such folks always think so, if they are the least sick. There, Brigham, there is a half-dollar; run and buy your mother some nice oranges, and I will be sure and come to-morrow."

Miss Seroy and Janet were already on the steps, Frank and Percy some distance down the street. Louise took a heavy blanket-shawl from the hat-tree, and began unfastening her cloak. Kate looked back at her.

"You are not going with the child?"

"Yes."

"But you can not go alone?"

Louise stopped in dismay; but Leonard, after holding a whispered consultation with Charlie, turned to Miss Fielding with evident reluctance, and asked if she were willing to accept Charlie's services as escort, and leave him at liberty to accompany Louise to Brigham's.

Such a look of pleased and grateful surprise as he gave her, when, in place of the refusal or aggrieved acquiescence he evidently expected, she replied, "Yes, indeed, I am glad you thought of it, or I will cheerfully remain at home; it may not be pleasant for them;" and she colored a little, perceiving the frown on Kate's brow.

But Charlie immediately drew her arm within his unoccupied one, and quietly checked Kate's impatient haste, to accommodate her feeble steps, while Leonard and Louise turned in the opposite direction, with Brigham clasping tightly a hand of each.

But they reached his cheerless home too

late. Another presence had anticipated them. Bridget Hale was dead.

Her husband came forward to meet them with the idiotic smile and thick utterance of a person half-intoxicated; and Louise understood in a moment that singular expression Brigham had made, "Father's nobody but Mike Hale to-night." Even his untutored mind felt that the word "father" included much in its signification, and that the wretched inebriate, when under the influence of his favorite dram, was indeed, *only* Mike Hale.

Louise drew the motherless boy to her side, whose grief, now that his worst fears were realized, had subsided into a sullen apathy, and tried to comfort him, — to explain to him the thought those words of his suggested to her; that to him God had heretofore been only a great Being, of whom Lawtie had told him; something indefinite, unattainable, undesirable, — *only* this: but now, she longed to help him realize the *Father* he is to those who will love him; to recognize even his own idea of what

a *father* should be, in the Lord, who is "pitiful and of tender mercy."

Leonard was waiting for her. There was nothing they could do, for two loud-voiced women and a priest were already disputing over the necessary arrangements. The same thought was in both their minds, — What shall be done with Brigham? "He must not be left here," said Louise, in a low but decided tone; "Let us take him to Mrs. Myers."

"Mammy sent me for her fust of all," interposed Brigham, "but Jamie was having one of his very worst spells, an' she couldn't come no-how; but I won't stay here with them, I'll run away fust."

"At all events we will take him with us to the 'domicil,'" said Leonard, closing the door upon the desolate room.

They found Mrs. Myers bending over the little couch, where Jamie was tossing restlessly from side to side, moaning with pain, yet trying to smile whenever he met his mother's anxious gaze. Beside her sat the doctor whom

Mr. Jennings had called to see the child, a few months before, and who had since been unremitting in his attentions, not wholly for the remuneration awaiting his services in the old man's leathern wallet. The worth of the tender words and thoughtful kindnesses suggested by his own Christian heart could not be adequately estimated. He made room for Leonard and Louise, as Jamie stretched out his attenuated hand in welcome. Brigham threw himself on the floor without speaking a word. The room was very neat, for Mrs. Myers could find time now to keep it so. The plants in the window were fresh and green, with a blossom here and there, which Jamie's eye had always been the first to detect. The little stand by the bed-side had never been without its glass of jelly or dish of fruit since Lawtie had received free permission to visit his suffering friend. The two boys had spent many happy hours together, and Jamie's first question was for him.

"I want to see him once more," he said

faintly. "He must come early to-morrow morning, before I go home to heaven."

Louise turned a very white face toward the doctor; she had almost ceased to connect death with these periods of suffering.

He met her inquiring look with a grave bow, and the words, spoken in a low tone,— "Jamie will have known the healing touch of the great Physician before another night-fall, I think."

"Will you please read that beautiful chapter, Mr. Houston," asked Jamie, "where it tells about the temple and the city whose gates shall not be shut at all by day, and the night never comes?"

Leonard turned immediately to the twenty-first chapter of Revelation, and read it with a slow distinct enunciation. Jamie's moans were hushed, although Louise could feel the convulsive working of the hand lying in hers long after he seemed to be sleeping quietly. Brigham had raised himself upon his elbow in order to see Leonard when he took the Bible to

read, and did not once withdraw his earnest gaze from him till that concluding verse was reached, — "And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination or maketh a lie," when he flung himself back upon the floor with a passionate outcry, quickly suppressed, but followed by a wild outburst of grief which refused to be comforted. He did not even seem to hear the sympathizing words, but with his face buried in the pillow they had brought him, he sobbed and cried till the slumbers of childhood lent him relief. Louise, having decided to remain with Mrs. Myers through the night, sent a message to Kate to bring Lawtie early in the morning, and Doctor Lee and Leonard went away together.

A few hours afterwards the sun threw its earliest beams into the east room, where Jamie was again tossing restlessly to and fro with that subdued moan which kept the tears in Louise's eyes.

He turned towards the window, and by bending over him she caught the words, —

"And the city hath no need of the sun, for the glory of God and the Lamb —" and then, with a look of suffering, — "neither shall there be any more pain."

The doctor, who had just entered, drew up the curtain as far as possible, and Jamie welcomed him with the touching smile he wore so often.

Accustomed as was Doctor Lee to conceal or master the tender emotions of his humane heart, he dashed away a tear as he stooped to whisper gently, — "The sun shall be no more thy light by day, but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light. Thy sun shall no more go down, neither shall thy moon withdraw itself; and the ways of thy mourning shall be ended."

Jamie's eye, fixed upon him while speaking, then fell upon Brigham, who, having suddenly awakened, stood confused and wondering looking from one to another.

"Say it again, Doctor," cried Jamie in a clear tone; "tell that to Brigham; *he* doesn't believe in heaven, he doesn't know how good

God is. Oh! he's so poor, for he hasn't got any thing in this world, nor in heaven either. Don't you want to go to heaven when you die, Brigham?"

"What's the use?" said the boy, sullenly. "I can't if I wanted ter."

The door opened, and Kate came in, her eyes red and swollen. She was followed by Leonard and Lawtie. The latter drew a chair close beside the bed, and without having spoken a word, laid his cheek against Jamie's, who threw one arm around Lawtie's neck and lay with his eyes closed, as if quite exhausted. Very soon, however, he opened them, and as if there had been no break in the conversation said, "Why can't you go to heaven, Brigham?"

The latter had crept upon the foot of the bed in his old position, and answered laconically, pointing to Leonard, —

"*He* knows; he read it out of a book last night."

Jamie thought a moment, and then said quickly, "'Whatsoever maketh a lie,' Brigham; was that it?"

"I should guess likely," was the reply.

"But wouldn't you try to do better to please Jesus? You used to, to please me."

The boy seemed to stifle a sob, as he answered again, "What's the use? I can't do it; an' ef I could, what you goin' to do with all that's done gone, — heaps of em, lies and worse'n lies?"

"Oh, Mr. Houston," said Jamie, "please read the next chapter; about the pure river."

Leonard opened the book at the last chapter and read, —

"And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yieldeth her fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations."

"There, that's it, that's enough," said Jamie faintly; "the leaves for the healing will keep away all sin up there, and down here it is —" his voice almost failed him, but he struggled

against the weakness, "the vine — Jesus — we must be branches; up there is the river of water of life — down here — it is Jesus' blood — 'twill make you — quite clean, Brigham — white as snow."

He could say no more; it was with a painful effort he drew the short convulsive breath, and Louise wiped away the cold drops gathering on his forehead.

"His earnestness in talking has used up his remaining strength very rapidly," said the doctor; "Jamie will soon be at rest."

The ear was not yet dull to loved voices.

"It was for Christ," he said in a whisper. "I am glad I could give him just a bit more of my life;" and then, as if he feared his words might have wounded a mother's loving heart, he added, "You will not care, dear mother? Christ said we must love him *most*. You taught me that."

Kate looked in wonder at the calmness with which that mother said, "Yes, my darling; 'He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me.'"

But the loving look from the child might well repay the mother's self-abnegation.

"We almost thought God had forgotten — what he told — us — a — father — "

"'A father of the fatherless, and a judge of the widow, is God in his holy habitation;' is that what you would say, Jamie?" and the mother bent over him with agonizing fondness. "God was good, and sent us these friends in our dark hour."

Brigham flashed a look of distrust upon her, and seemed to wait anxiously for Jamie's reply.

"Yes, we knew then — but if he — hadn't he would have — made it all right — sometime. He only helped — us trust, and — I was *so* glad."

Lawtie raised his head for the first time.

"Jamie, God let me come; will you thank him for me up in heaven?"

The eyes of the sufferer turned their last look of earthly cognizance upon the eager questioner, and as they closed wearily, the pale

lips murmured, "Blessing — and honor — and glory — and power be unto — "

In the presence of his Saviour was Jamie's earth-born acclamation finished, and the sweet voice was blended, but not lost, in that of the "great multitude which no man can number."

When both Bridget Hale and lame Jamie had been lowered to their last resting-places, when Mrs. Myers had resumed the daily toil which was to bring food and clothing to her remaining little ones, and Mike Hale was drowning his sorrow in his cup, a quiet group was seated in Mrs. Thorne's parlor discussing Brigham's future. Into the midst of their gayety the past few days had cast a shadow, dim, to be sure, but making death a nearer reality than it is wont to seem. Besides, an idea had fastened itself under Lawtie's flaxen curls, and would not be dislodged. Samp was going away, having outgrown the drudgery of errand-boy, and why couldn't Brigham fill his place? He had importuned Louise so earnestly "to ask, just *ask* mamma," that she had at last gone slowly

up-stairs, half repenting her promise, and quite unaware that Lawtie was kneeling in that empty niche in the front hall, with clasped hands, pleading with God to "make mamma say yes." Only Joanna, passing by, chanced to catch a glimmer of the curls floating over the crimson tunic, and, familiar as she was with pictures of halo-encircled saints, it was little wonder that the child should ever afterwards be canonized in her mind; or that when in his earnestness he uttered the petition, aloud "Please let my Big'un come here to live, and make him a good boy for Jesus' sake," Brigham was sure of at least one friend in the kitchen.

When Louise preferred her request, Mrs. Thorne hesitated. She disliked to introduce such an "apple of discord" into her kitchen, with Mrs. Doughty's unfortunate temper, but at last consented that he should come upon trial. With unusual interest she then inquired after the other girls, and if they were passing a pleasant winter. Louise, in return, related a few incidents of their daily life, and with sud-

den frankness, surprising to herself, spoke of the new life Miss Fielding had begun, the happiness it gave her, and the very perceptible change it was making in her disposition.

"The poor girl has known sorrow as well as I," said Mrs. Thorne, "and has been driven to the only refuge for tempest-tossed souls. How well I know her present feelings, remembering the overwhelming joy with which my aching heart first received to itself those promises of forgiven sin! In them the soul may ever hope and trust, but oh! how quickly the joy fades away, the gladness disappears!"

"Oh no!" replied Louise. "Isn't it that first feeling of wonder and surprise we lose? not the joy, for that is one of the fruits of the Spirit, and Christ said, 'Your joy no man taketh from you.'"

Mrs. Thorne shook her head sadly, and covered her eyes with her delicate hand, from which gleamed a single diamond, saying, "It was in this very room I found my Lord; and here I resolved to remain, shutting out the world, in whose vain service I had spent all the

happy years of my life, whose happiness had vanished like the dew; and shutting myself in, with my God and his Word, to feast my soul continually upon the preciousness and joy of those promises, till he called me to their fulfillment at his right hand. But soon, very soon, the old, restless ache came back, and a burden of sadness I have no power to remove. I was reading this morning of the transfiguration on the mount; and I thought how like to that is the interview we have with Christ when first we seek his face. I do not wonder Peter said, 'It is good to be here,' and desired to build a tabernacle for their permanent abode. So would I have made this room my tabernacle, but in vain; and I can feel with what sad hearts the disciples must have gone down to the deceitful, unsatisfying world."

Louise thought of the toil, the endurance, the persecution, to which those disciples returned, but she feared to express it in words. Lawtie, however, who had come in a few moments before, and was sitting on a hassock at

his mother's feet, with his head on her lap, looked up suddenly, with the question, —

"Mother, what did the disciples do when they went down the mountain?"

"I do not remember," she said, absently.

"Miss Fay, what did they do?" persisted Lawtie. "What did Christ do? because he must have been glad to hear his Father call him his 'beloved Son,' and to see a bit of that glory he had from the beginning, you know; and how he must have dreaded to go down again into that wicked world, that hateful Jerusalem, where he knew they would kill him pretty soon! Don't you know what he did?"

Louise hesitated a moment, and then replied, "There was probably a crowd, waiting, as they ever did, for him to heal their sick; there were parents seeking his blessing on their little ones; there were the other disciples, desirous of understanding his sayings more clearly. He must have resumed immediately those labors of love for which he came to earth."

"And my verse this morning said; 'Christ suffered for us, leaving us an example, that we

should follow his steps,'" repeated the child, reverently; "and didn't Peter say that, mamma, the same Peter that went up into that beautiful mountain?"

His mother had drawn the little stand, on which the large Bible still lay open, nearer to her, and was looking earnestly over the illuminated page.

"Say, mamma," urged Lawtie, impatiently, "what does it say the disciples did first?"

"Luke speaks of their disputing which should be greatest," she said. "Oh, how long and successfully Satan has used that subtle argument to win souls for his own kingdom."

"Yes, mamma," interrupted Lawtie, "Miss Howe says she wishes she was bigger than every body else; but what did Jesus do to the disciples? Did he send them back into the mountain, where the naughty tempter couldn't find them, to stay till they were good again?"

"No, for Christ was long-suffering. He taught them patiently of the better way; he rebuked them for the wrong spirit they had shown towards the world; and bade them re-

member the 'Son of man had not where to lay his head.'"

Lawtie thrust his white curls under his mother's elbow, and looking at the first verse of the next chapter, he cried, gleefully, "No, mamma, that isn't all he did; he said he wanted laborers; he set them to work, didn't he, to get other people to be good? and that would make *them* keep good. I guess he doesn't want us to just have a good time now, loving him, but to work hard, and have a better time by and by, up in heaven."

Louise closed the door upon the mother and child, bending intently over the blessed Book, praying, in her turn, that God might have put into Lawtie's mouth that "word in season" which he himself would bless.

The group in the parlor rejoiced over the result of her mission in Brigham's behalf; but Kate followed Uncle Paul to the door, to whisper in his ear, as she kissed him, "It isn't always fire that tries people's work, of what sort it is; and Brigham will perpetually remind me of that. Good-night."

CHAPTER XI.

KATE'S MASQUERADE.

"Turning, for them who pass, the common dust
Of servile opportunity to gold."

I MUST have a breathing-hole, Joanna."

It was Kate who spoke, sitting on a low stool beside the kitchen range, her elbow resting on her knee, her chin in her hand, and her eyes watching Joanna, busy with the pastry.

"A what, Miss Kate?"

"A breathing-hole. Don't you see it has been rain, rain, nothing but rain, for eight-and-forty hours? and it has taken every bit of starch out of me, and I can't stay penned up a minute longer. I should like a real old-fashioned game of hide and seek. I wonder if there isn't an old chest up in the garret, in which I could lay myself away like the heroine of the 'Mistletoe Bough,' and let the girls

find my skeleton whenever they hit upon the right place."

"The saints presarve us!" ejaculated Joanna, facing round with a look of horror. "Ye must be gone clean daft, Miss Kate, an' it's lucky there's but one chist in the ould attic, and that's chock-full of duds, so ye'll jist kape the flesh on yer bones a while longer."

"A chest full of what?" asked Kate, laughing at Joanna's literal understanding of her idle words.

"Duds; old cloaks and bunnits and sich like, made in the year one, for all I know. Sure they was all there when the judge bought the house, and Mrs. Doughty, she was for burnin' thim all up for fear they'd get the small-pox or whooping-cough, but the judge wouldn't let her. He said like as not some day or other they'd make an air-moon for some body, and so she jist aired 'em a dale an' thin tucked 'em all back jist where they be this blissed day."

"An 'air-moon,' Joanna; what was that you said? Oh, oh!" and Kate danced around the

kitchen in a paroxysm of laughter. "Oh, Joanna, you will be the death of me! It was an heir-loom he said, wasn't it?"

Joanna pared the edges of her crust, balancing the pie carefully on one hand, with considerable doubt in her face whether or not to be offended at Kate's merriment. But good-nature won the day, and she ran her fingers around the edge of the pie in a series of gentle pats, saying,—"Mabbe you know better nor I, who was there meself, and heard what he said with me own ears. But it's I that doesn't see any sinse to aither of 'em. An heir-loom or air-moon is all the same."

"Does any body go to the attic now, Joanna?"

"Nobody but meself, whose room opens jist beside it, an it's I that never steps a fut acrost the ould threshold, for they do say —"

"That it's haunted? I'll warrant it, with glittering-eyed, soft-voiced, flat-footed, chisel-toothed sort of ghosts; haven't you seen them, Joanna?"

"Ye rattle it off so fast, I can't begin to keep up with me understanding, but thin I'm none the less believing garrets has ghosts."

"I'm sure of it, Joanna, but doesn't Mrs. Doughty ever go there?"

"Once every year. Precisely on the twenty-ninth day of April, bein' it doesn't come of a Sunday, she begins the house-clanin' under the big rafter in the middle; an' I'm thinking the spiders have learned jist when to expect her, and find it convanient to step out for a day or so. At all evints, there's never so much as a week gone before they are as plenty as iver."

"Well, Joanna, I shall have a terrible headache this afternoon. I feel it coming on this minute, and so I shall retire directly after dinner, and you——" but Kate's voice subsided into the lowest of whispers, intended only for Joanna's ear. The conference lasted half an hour, the pies waiting all that time with a happy unconsciousness that they ought to be in a hotter atmosphere, and then Kate betook herself to the attic.

Toward night the headache was duly an-

nounced according to Kate's programme, the little sprite even abstaining from eating, that the girls might be more fully impressed with its severity; and very soon Miss Kate was obliged to go up-stairs to lie down, declaring her intention, if she felt lonely, to do so in Mrs. Thorne's room instead of her own.

Frank came in for a little while in the evening, but was obliged to leave early. So the girls were alone, trying by yawns and wishes to make bed-time come earlier, when Joanna's head was thrust into the room.

"Will ye come down into the kitchen a minute? There's the queerest body there. Mrs. Doughty 'll be sending her off in a hist if she hears a lisp. The ould body knows every thing about my whole life; and she wants to be telling the young leddies' fortunes to get a bit scrip for her night's lodgin'."

Five pairs of eyes looked at each other in indecision; and then Percy jumped up, exclaiming, "Any thing for a change. Come, let's see her. Of course I should not believe a word of it." Prima Donna seconded the

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movement, and they all followed Joanna downstairs, except Miss Fielding. In the darkest corner of the kitchen sat the fortune-teller, her wide-frilled cap and large, melon-shaped yellow silk hood quite concealing her face, except a pair of huge-bowed glasses. A long green cloak enveloped her entire person, except in front, where could be seen a bit of her scanty brown-stuff dress. Her hands were covered with coarse striped mittens of woolen yarn, and made alternate use of a snuff-box and the immense bandanna handkerchief laid across her lap, pausing occasionally to spread out, with evident complacency, the broad white ruffled collar about her neck.

She was not inclined to be talkative, only wishing "to study the palms of the young ladies' delicate white hands," which complimentary remark brought Miss Seroy to terms, and her taper fingers laid the requisite scrip and themselves upon the striped mitten.

With a start of horror or surprise, the old woman let them fall suddenly, and then, exam-

ining them more closely, exclaimed slowly, "Can it be possible? Do I see aright?"

"What is it?" asked Miss Seroy, hurriedly, "a count or an earl? Ma said she would take me to London, if there wasn't so much risk of getting cheated in that sort of folks; a little out of our line, you know."

"A race of kings there was, on both sides," muttered the old woman, at which Prima Donna's eyes fairly shone with expectation, and Louise began to watch the fortune-teller more curiously.

"Shall I cross the water to find him?" asked Prima Donna.

"I can't reveal that," was the reply, after a cough had been smothered in the bandanna handkerchief; "you have committed some dark deed which hides your future from me, except that something terrible will happen; suspicions are already afloat. I can even see something like a platform or scaffold ——"

"The stage, of course; I always knew I was destined for some brilliant public career," interrupted Miss Seroy.

"It wears the color of a calamity, rather, at least till you confess."

"It is only because you are unused to such rare fortune," said Miss Seroy, haughtily withdrawing her hand; "I dare say you are unwilling to tell all."

Percy came forward next, and in the same half-intelligible tone the old woman resumed:

"Wishes immense, prospect of success moderate; fair weather just at present: marble front, six-story, leader of ton; but better daylight than darkness *in* action as well as *for* action; all fair, above ground, you know; feel better."

"Feel better above ground? of course I should," rejoined Percy, with an effort to laugh off what seemed in some way very disagreeable, and turning away as if already satisfied.

"I do not think either of you much wiser for yours," said Janet, taking her vacated chair; "I should like something more definite."

"Humph — well! There's water to be crossed before you stand together at the altar; it will be safely done, unless there should be

a change in what he now intends; he will go on board in two and one half months; prospects very bright, love the right, always kiss it, when you don't miss it." And the old fortune-teller blew her nose energetically, which was the first punctuation mark her last speech would admit of.

"It sounds very much like the witches in Macbeth," laughed Janet.

"And definite enough, isn't it?" asked Percy.

"And agrees strikingly with your last letter," said Louise, trying to communicate her suspicions to Janet, and not unobservant of the look bent upon her by the old woman.

But just then Uncle Paul came down-stairs, having dropped in, as he frequently did, on his way home.

They all began to talk at once, and the old man listened with his genial smile.

"But where is Kitty?" he asked at length, missing her volubility. "I should think this would just suit her."

"Kate is not *herself* to-night," replied

Louise, her suspicions confirmed at the little start given by the queer figure in the corner.

"She had such a severe headache, we did not call her," said Percy, innocently. "Come, Uncle Paul, let us hear your fortune."

But both he and Louise declined looking into their futures, and the old woman drew up her cloak as if about to leave.

Uncle Paul asked her a few questions about herself, but she answered very laconically; and he followed the girls up-stairs, Louise having advised Joanna to "get the poor creature a bit of cold victuals, the fish-balls left from breakfast, for instance," which she knew to be Kate's special aversion, and feeling quite sure of what none of the others seemed to mistrust, as to the identity of their visitor.

But Uncle Paul turned back. It had become second nature with him to speak the word "in season and out of season."

"My good woman," he said, taking her hand, "they have given you money; I want to give you a kindly word. You pretend to read the future of your fellow-mortals. Whether this

is right, for their amusement or your own gain, I leave with you; but I want you to remember that our Lord declares nothing to be secret which shall not be made manifest in that day when we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, and when all those who obey not his gospel shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord. Are you ready to hear your sentence from the lips of him who will judge the secrets of men? At that great tribunal will you be found among those who shall call on the mountains and rocks to hide them from the wrath of a just God, or will you then continue the new song learned on earth by the followers of the Lamb, 'Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood'?"

If Uncle Paul had not been wholly absorbed in the earnest import of his own words, he must have recognized the startled look which flashed upon him from under the hood; but he only slipped a trifle of money and a tract into the striped mitten, and left the kitchen. When Joanna came out of the closet the kitch-

en was empty, and she hurried up to her attic room, where she had agreed to help Kate. There she found the latter hastily throwing off her articles of disguise, and complaining that the spectacles made her eyes ache.

"An' sure," said Joanna, helping to fold up the old clothes, "I like to have burst a laffin'; an' in the closet while I was waitin' for the ould man to get off, I had to let the cork out of the yeast-jug jist to hide me own scrache a bit, made out of the breath I'd hild so long. But what was he sayin'? He niver suspected, did he? I couldn't be after hearin' a word, an' ye cleared out so sudden like."

"Oh, he only stuck a pin into my 'air-moon,' Joanna, and let the gas off, and you know it is quite necessary I should be in bed when the girls come up. There, tuck the hood into that spare corner a little harder, so that the cover will shut down. That's all right. Here is a neck-ribbon I put in my pocket for you. I laughed so much while I was putting on those queer things I really can't get up a smile now; but then the getting ready is always the best

part of a thing, — most things I mean, and the disrobing very tiresome. Hark! What is that?"

It was Lawtie singing one of the quaint evening hymns taught him by his old nurse.

> "We lay our garments by,
> Upon the bed to rest;
> So death will soon disrobe us all
> Of what we here possess."

Louise did not find Kate inclined to talk about her masquerade

CHAPTER XII.

CHANGES.

"Easy to forbear, glorious to forgive.'

EVER since Louise refused to accompany Frank to the theater, her practice hours had been spent alone. "All your own fault, your rigid sense of duty, your old-fashioned notions of right and wrong," whispered the tempter again and again; and each time only a prayer for divine aid enabled her to resist the unhappy suggestion. She was conscious, too, of a growing disquietude and annoyance whenever the girls commented upon the fact that Frank's kind attentions, shared so freely by them all, were becoming more exclusively Percy's prerogative. Such feelings were never welcomed or cherished, but knowing them we can better understand and excuse the eager-

ness with which Louise turned to her books and music for constant employment.

Kate was in her element again with the prospect of a large fair, held under the auspices of a society whose president was no other than Mrs. Trahammon. Mrs. Lovejoy, too, being one of the managers, of course the girls would be expected to lend their assistance.

"It is sure to be a great success," said the last-mentioned lady, who had brought them the information, "for wealth and fashion go ahead, the Pharisee, Miss Dorkiss, trots after with the bag, and good Uncle Paul brings up the rear, to see that all the scrapings go into the right channel. The dear old man approves the object, but considers it a hard way of picking people's pockets, with the one redeeming feature that it promotes sociability and kindly feeling. But he is terribly afraid of getting his fingers into a wholesale lottery, and if I professed what church-members do, and yet engaged in some of this fashionable raffling, I believe I should feel a little ticklish for fear I might some day

be reckoned right in with the kind of people who cheat in the same way, only disposing of their spoils in a less benevolent manner. But this affair will be all right, for Mrs. Trahammon will have an eye on Uncle Paul's ready money, whatever conscience has to say about the matter." And then the lively lady proceeded to enlarge on the fancy tables, for which Janet promised to paint a small picture, and Kate to fashion several nondescript trifles, the supper-room and the tableaux, concerning which last Louise inwardly congratulated herself that she and Percy would be quite *au fait*, since at home and at school their inventive taste and skill had always been considered indispensable in such matters.

Even Miss Fielding, who had been wont to sit mute and depressed when lively topics were under discussion, now proposed several really fine ideas, although Miss Seroy chose to consider them otherwise, having taken it upon herself to annoy poor Miss Fielding as much as possible of late.

The next day Louise was in the kitchen on

an errand to Joanna, and observed a large pile of fine clothes belonging to the girls, which poor Maggie, after steadily ironing all day, must carry up two flights of stairs and distribute in their rooms. Remembering the fatigue of ironing days at home, Louise, with her usual thoughtfulness, offered to take them up for her, and with the light but bulky pile filling both arms, she proceeded carefully up-stairs and through the dining-room, when, hearing voices in the hall, she stopped to reconnoiter, before exhibiting herself as laundress *pro tem* to any chance caller.

She very easily recognized Frank's voice telling the girls that Mrs. Lovejoy had deputed him to say that the whole matter of tableaux would be left in their hands, except that Miss Bell was to assist, and they had better be systematic and appoint two of their number as a superintending committee.

"Percy is a host in herself," said Kate, "judging by what she says of her experience in that line. I move we appoint her general supervisor."

"But it would hardly be best to put the whole burden upon her, little as we doubt her ability to sustain it," rejoined Frank, — Louise could imagine with how genial a smile, — "and if Janet is too busy with her painting, perhaps Miss Fay would ——"

"Don't ask her," interrupted Percy, and Louise, half-doubting her own ears, bent forward with crimsoning cheeks; "you will only shock her sense of duty, and call out a lecture on our shortcomings in general. I don't know whether she will squeeze the tea-party in, under the head of innocent recreations, so as to manage to attend, or not; but there's no use in entertaining an idea of her becoming an accomplice."

What a blush of indignation mantled the whole face of the unseen listener! Miss Seroy's disagreeable laugh was of little moment, but that Percy could speak so of her, a tried friend, — could say what she knew to be false! Laying the clothes upon the table, Louise stepped softly into the back entry and sat down upon the upper step of the basement

stairs, burying her face in her hands to cool her burning cheeks; she was too angry, too indignant, for tears. How quickly she recalled one and another past word or act of Percy's, seeming strange at the time, but which she had leniently excused or overlooked. Now they returned, to increase her tumult of feeling, her sense of deep, personal injury, and bitter, revengeful desires. Could those last have shaped themselves into words, for her inspection, she would have been surprised to find how little they differed from Brigham's feelings whenever his fist clinched to retaliate some taunting word from his street companions. How would they differ except in the purity of the English, or in points of syntax?

Once she started to her feet to confront Percy before them all, and force her to confess the injury she was purposing to do her. It may be that the morning prayer, always uttered by Louise with a feeling of her great need, "Lead us not into temptation," saved her in that unguarded moment. A second thought showed her the unchristian spirit she

would thus exhibit before the others; and she sat down again to wait their departure, determined then to seek Percy alone, and let her know she was not disposed to bear such obloquy in silence.

Just then Lawtie's clear tones, in earnest confab with Joanna below, met her ear; and, as an agreeable substitute for her own excited thoughts, she again became a listener.

She soon gathered that Joanna was also in high dudgeon over some affront received from her brother; and like the soothing ripple of the brooklet came Lawtie's childish tones after her loud, rapid utterance, "But you will forgive him, Joanna, won't you?"

"An' it's myself that won't do that same," was the reply, "if it's the forgiveness ye mane that forgets all about it, and laves matters exactly as they was afore. It is I that knows too well what he desarves, the spalpeen!"

"But, Joanna, then you can't use the prayer Jesus gave us, for you would ask him to treat you just as you deserve; and oh dear! nobody

wants God to do that. I would rather forgive him."

"But I'll give him the bit of me tongue," returned Joanna, "that'll aise me mind like, anyhow. It's nobody that'll deny ye feel a dale more comfortable like to let fly a knock or two when yer smarting purty badly yerself. I don't believe there's any thing in *my* Bible about yer ither cheek, an' lovin' folks as jist trates ye anyhow; leastwise I should hope not."

"But Jesus prayed for those wicked people who spit in his face, and struck him."

"An' it's I that niver pretends to be as good as him," returned Joanna.

"But he wants us to," said Lawtie; "he told us to follow him just as near as we could."

"Sure an' what wid the praste be afther doing, if we was?" she asked, triumphantly.

"We need to be forgiven when we do the best we can, it is so bad," said Lawtie; "but I'd rather go to Jesus than the priest. *He*

doesn't want you to give money to get forgiven; for it says in the Bible, 'without money and without price.'"

"My way is good enough for me," said Joanna, "for ye see, I can airn the money a dale easier than I can tend to me tongue, and all the trouble inside. Jist to think of letting folks walk right on yer head an' niver open yer mouth."

"Think in that case 'twould be best to keep it shut, any way," interposed Brigham; "but s'pose somebody should throw stones at you, Lawtie, guess I'd give 'em a taste of the same shot, and yet not be so dreadful wicked?"

"If any body was really hurting me," said Lawtie; "and I couldn't get out of the way, it would be right for you to make them stop; but I must love them all the time, you see, or, at least, not *want* them to get hurt."

"Should like to see ye do it," said Brigham.

"I couldn't alone, my Big'un," replied Lawtie, seriously, "but if I began to pray for them, the naughty feelings would go away, for I've tried it."

"But if a feller calls ye names, it's wuss than a whole stone heap a flyin', an' I don't believe whoever writ the Bible knew how it riles ye up, if he thought we'd mind sich stuff."

"The Bible is God's Word," said Lawtie, with earnest emphasis, "and Jesus became a man, so we could believe he knows just how we feel; and he said, 'Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, pray for them that despitefully use you.' Isn't that plain enough, Joanna?"

It was growing plain enough to somebody besides Joanna; but although Louise could hear the latter's energetic egg-beating, there was no reply for some time; and then it came with a jerk, as of one convinced against her will.

"If every body that pertends to belave that same would jist show us how to do it, I'm thinkin' there'd be little need of praste or preacher aither."

"If they would," repeated Louise to herself, as after hearing the group in the front hall disperse she went slowly up-stairs, "if they would;

but it is so hard! Can it mean such a case as mine, when Percy was so unjust, — so deceitful? and yet it says 'your enemies;' I never felt half that word meant before. An enemy! it is such we are to love, and, of course, forgive. Oh, Lawtie, the 'prayer Jesus gave us,' I can not give that up;" and she leaned her head for a moment on the railing.

God's word is truth. "Before they call I will answer, and while they are yet speaking, I will hear."

When Louise again went on her way, her mind was no longer a scene of contest. In her saddened face were still traces of the struggle, but the matter was decided; and Percy was left in ignorance that any other than the unseen Eye had that morning fathomed her selfish designs.

Preparations for the fair went rapidly forward, but Louise was quite set aside. To be sure, it was no very noticeable neglect, for Janet, at work on her picture, had nothing to do with the busier duties that kept Miss Seroy, Kate, and Percy flying hither and thither, and

passing the greater part of their time at the Hall. Probably Mrs. Lovejoy never noticed that her favorite was not so fully employed as the others, but Louise felt it very much, all the more because her taste and assistance had been so universally sought in the preparations for Christmas.

She found that in the Christian's warfare the complete victory cometh not with a single though severe struggle, but that he must contend for every step of the enemy's ground, through which he passes to an eternal inheritance. Uncharitable and envious thoughts continually assailed her, and sometimes gained the ascendancy; for when Percy came to her one day, to refresh her memory concerning several important particulars of a few scenes they had frequently arranged together, Louise answered her shortly, giving her as little help as possible, and Percy left the room angrily, with a fling at the "accommodating spirit some people professed and possessed."

That last remark lingered with Louise, and gradually crowded out the thought how aggra-

vating it was in Percy to presume to come to her for assistance, after saying what she had about her.

What did she, Louise, profess? Obedience to Him who said, "Do good to them that hate you;" who did not make love to himself the whole requirement, but said, "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another."

Again upon her knees she sought help to overcome, — not the world now, but herself; that pride and selfishness might give way to true lowliness of mind. She had tried long enough, and felt sure that no argument or reasoning could enable her to "feel right" again, nothing but a resolute putting away of self, and looking unto Jesus, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame. Knowing that, shall his children faint when they are rebuked of him?

Rebuked? Yes, for when Louise again became calm, she saw much of the present trial in a new light: she was not only to submit to these disappointments patiently, with no ill-will

to the human agencies through which they seemed to come, but she might look upon them as a discipline needful for her onward progress. Continued success might have fostered her natural pride; and these pleasures, so innocent in themselves, — might not the loving hand of a Father withhold them, foreseeing some pernicious effect upon herself, or to test some virtue he would fain strengthen? We call severe afflictions God's discipline, and believe he doeth all things wisely for our good, but does not he who careth for the sparrow's fall as surely appoint each trivial vexation or trying disappointment? "Who ought to be unhappy?" she said aloud, "let these foolish hearts of ours ache as they will? If

> "I can not see, with my short human sight,
> Why God should lead this way or that for me;
> I only know he saith, 'Child, follow me,'
> But I can trust."

It was a very light heart that Louise carried all that day, such light-heartedness as the world knows little of. It transferred itself to Miss Fielding, as together they manufactured

miniature antiquarian rooms out of walnuts and bits of lace and silk ; it cheered poor Kate when she came home with a dull headache, and was obliged to lie on the sofa all the evening ; and it did more : it prompted Louise to hand Percy a sheet of paper accidentally found in her writing-desk, with the very items penciled upon it about which the latter had inquired that morning. And again, for a time, envy and pride were baffled.

The evening for the fair was as favorable as possible, clear and not severely cold. The girls were all in high spirits, and that added fresh luster to bright eyes and sprightliness to lively movements, as they mingled with the crowd of young and old who helped swell the murmur of happy voices and the under current of social good-feeling in the hall on V——Street. They went early, of course, and Louise, supplying for a little while Mrs. Lovejoy's place at a refreshment table, found herself, in the intervals between customers, watching Miss Fielding as she slowly passed and re-passed her, leaning on Leonard's arm, looking so neatly in a new gray merino, with

the scarlet shawl, a gift from Louise on New Year's, flinging its graceful folds pityingly over the deformity it could not wholly conceal. The look of discontent was so nearly obliterated one could almost forget the frightful scar, in the happy smile that made the blue eyes soft and radiant, and lingered on the lips now red with excitement. Louise could fancy, as never before, the sensible face and warm heart which had first won Leonard's affection, and recalled with a tear of pity what Miss Fielding had confided to her but yesterday, that with the avowal of her Christian hope and joy, she had also released Leonard from the engagement between them, and begged him to resume his studies, and, having fitted himself for the position he coveted, seek some one qualified physically, as well as morally, to help him fill it usefully and honorably.

Louise was not at all surprised that he utterly refused, but she could not forget Miss Fielding's look, when, after telling of her inability to persuade him, she traced with her crochet needle the blue veins so plainly visi-

ble on her transparent hands, saying, "Ah well! It will not be so very long, and then God will release him and make it all right."

Kate tapped Louise playfully as she stood thinking of this, and exclaimed, following the direction of her eyes, "It is too bad Leonard is tied up to her. I know he must be dreadfully mortified. He has such a fine form! I hope she won't go round with him all the evening."

Louise turned to her with a startled "Hush!" for Miss Fielding was coming quite near them, and even Kate colored as she added, "Dear me! I didn't mean to speak so loud."

But they both forgot it directly, talking of other things, only Louise chanced to notice, by and by, that Miss Fielding had seated herself in a very retired corner, and was sending Leonard off to assist Kate, with a smile very unlike the aggrieved expression which used to take note of his every movement.

"The 'love that seeketh not her own' is surely hers," thought Louise; "and how glad I am Dr. Lee and his pretty wife are sitting beside her; and there goes Uncle Paul, who makes

everybody happy." But just then the return of Mrs. Lovejoy left her at liberty to accept a promenade with Mr. Vose, and to enter very heartily into the little skirmishes of wit and repartee exchanged as they stopped to chat now and then with some mutual friend.

Perhaps somebody did not relish her evident enjoyment. Perhaps it was a mere accident that so soon brought Miss Seroy and Percy to her side, with the earnest request that she would help them, or Mrs. Trahammon rather, out of a vexatious disappointment. It had been left with Prima Donna to provide for the post-office, but in helping Percy with the tableaux she had entirely forgotten it. Charlie, who was to provide a place, had executed his commission with a great deal of taste, and there were already numberless applicants for letters. Would Louise come in and write for them?

Mr. Vose said "No," and Louise was half inclined to second it, but better feelings prevailed, and she was shown into the little warm box of a room, where a dozen other young ladies and a few gentlemen were scribbling very

brief and hieroglyphic epistles. They all worked busily for some time, and then one and another dropped out, till she was left alone with Miss Bell, who was delivering the letters through the flower-wreathed aperture. Louise had laid aside her pen to follow their example, when Percy came in with a message from Mrs. Trahammon, that "Fanny Bell was wanted elsewhere, and would Miss Fay be kind enough to remain there in her place a little while?" "I would stay myself," added Percy, "only Frank wants me to go down to the supper-room immediately."

Of course Louise assented, and of course no one will blame her for the few tears that fell on the bright evergreen as she resumed her solitary confinement. They made her feel better, at least, and then, as the more powerful attraction of the supper-room left her but few chance visitors, she leaned her head on her hand for a few minutes' quiet thought. Of course her fancy led her first to the old farmhouse, and the loving mother sitting by the lonely fireside with busy hands, which

Louise longed to feel upon her head once more. The little trial she had undergone the last few days, and its renewal this evening, made her turn with a stronger yearning toward the best of all earthly refuges, — a mother's sympathy. Let the sorrow be never so trivial, or the burden never so weighty, between that and the aching heart comes the gentle healing touch of a mother's love, and we go away comforted. Such memories as these must have stirred the prophet Isaiah, when he wrote, — "As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you." And the speaker was none other than the Lord of Hosts, and the same who, in later years, assured his children that the Comforter should abide with them for ever. "And yet," thought Louise, "those children grieve over trifling disappointments, chafe at petty trials, look enviously at the prosperity of others, instead of opening their hearts to this divine presence, or lifting their eyes from the roughness of the way to the glory beyond; and sadder yet it is that after they have had proofs of this wonderful

love, have felt, if only at intervals, the joy unspeakable, they so seldom urge others to go with them towards that better land; they seem to forget the dreadful thing it is to be without God and without hope in the world. Only to think of myself the past winter! How seldom I have reminded the girls, by word and example, of the endless life or death toward which each hour is bearing us onward!"

Under the impulse of these thoughts, she traced on a sheet of paper before her that comprehensive verse, — "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life," and the words of the hymn, commencing with —

> "One there is, above all others,
> Well deserves the name of friend."

She would hand them to Kate to-morrow, and each line seemed just what her own warm heart would have dictated. She had finished, and was looking among the envelopes lying before her for one bearing Kate's name, when she became aware by the increased merriment

outside that the crowd was returning from supper.

Customers began to flock around her little window again, and while supplying their demands she saw Frank and Percy coming slowly up the stairs. She saw them meet Mrs. Trahammon, who, after talking earnestly with Percy a few moments, drew her away with a graceful apology to Frank. She noticed, too, that the latter walked on quite alone, vouchsafing only a grave bow to the groups of merry talkers on every side, and wondered if it was her fancy that detected an unusual seriousness in his manner.

Then something diverted her attention, till in her first moment of entire leisure she was startled by his voice, inquiring, — "Has no one cared enough for me to leave a message in your keeping, Miss Fay?"

She turned to the pile of letters. There was none among them for him; but on one side lay an empty envelope bearing his address. A sudden thought suggested itself. In her hand she still held the message she had written for

Kate. She thrust it into the envelope, sealed it hastily, and handed it to him. It was all done in a moment, and trembling at the boldness of the venture, she could scarcely find words to answer his common-place remarks upon the attractiveness of the scene before them. Her brief replies may have provoked the observation with which he turned away. "I think you will have to allow, Miss Fay, that the world offers some pleasures vastly agreeable, to say the least."

She sighed as she reseated herself, and the pleasant voice of Dr. Lee at her elbow inquired, — "Is that sigh for what the world has, or for what it has not?"

She welcomed him with a smile. "I was thinking how hard we try to believe the world just what we want it to be, — capable of satisfying our every desire; and it *is* beautiful."

"Yes. 'He has made everything beautiful in his time,'" was the doctor's reply, and then he waited as if for her to go on.

"And the human heart, even after it has been renewed, is very prone to look upon these

attractions — I do not mean the beauties of nature, but the inventions man has sought out for the attainment of happiness — with a feeling, that what is so manifestly pleasant can not be harmful, or, at least, to inquire how far they may safely be indulged."

"Very true, but we may go to the 'beauties of nature' for an answer. Does not nature clothe her deadliest poisons in attractive form and color? We admire them, but would not make them our food. The southern morass, where lurk the fatal miasma and venomous serpent, is one gorgeous mass of bewildering beauty; yet who would make it his abiding-place? So the immortal soul should not feed upon that which God has declared fatal to its onward progress, nor make its abiding-place of a world of which it may be said, —

'Fleeting is thy beauty's gleam,
False and changing as a dream.'

But as in the natural, so in the spiritual life: every thing lovely is not pernicious; enough remains to supply all our needs, only just here we ought to remember that excess even in

harmless things is not prudent. Rather a professional illustration, I allow, but —— "

"Talking on professional topics, are you, doctor? Better consider them tabooed until supper is over;" and the gray-haired senator whom Louise had met that first evening at Mrs. Lovejoy's entered their little apartment. He shook hands with Dr. Lee, and then turned immediately to her. "Ah! is it you, Miss Fay? I have been inquiring for you of Mrs. Lovejoy. There is a nice little party of us talkative people going down to supper together: I suppose I am very presumptuous, but if you will favor an old man with your company, we'll have another nice chat together."

"Come, doctor," he continued. as Louise took his arm with a flush of pleasure, "we must have you, and are glad to get so worthy a representative of your profession to put among our three ministerial brethren, two lawyers, and one real live general, sound to the core; and what with our toasts and speeches — provided they are short and witty — you needn't

expect to get a nice fee out of us from over-eating."

The doctor went to find his wife, and Louise was glad to see Leonard and Miss Fielding returning with them, as well as Uncle Paul and Janet. Just then Mr. Vose thrust his head into the little window. "Miss Fay, can't you get released from this durance vile long enough to give me the pleasure of your company to supper?"

Senator B —— stepped up to him with mock indignation, and pointing to the hand imprisoned within his arm, said, —

"Do you affirm this to be durance vile, sir?"

Mr. Vose made a laughing apology, but declared the other had no right to steal such a march upon him, after his long and patient waiting for Miss Fay's discharge from duty; and a little feeling of triumph crept into Louise's heart, on her perceiving Miss Seroy standing near enough to overhear the whole colloquy. Not very strange, — was it? but it troubled her, and she tried to lose sight of it

in gratitude for this unexpected pleasure, as they went down to the supper-room.

The tableaux came last on the programme, and elicited great applause. To do Percy justice, we should also add that when Louise congratulated her — as she did very heartily on her success — she frankly confessed before them all how much she was indebted to the suggestions received from Louise. Kate's keen look at them both seemed as if an inkling of the true state of affairs had penetrated her brain; but she only said to Leonard as she flitted past him, — "My polar star shines steadily again."

And by and by it was all through, and silence and darkness settled down over dismantled stage, bare tables, and littered floors.

When the girls reached home they were surprised to find the gas burning dimly in the parlor, and evident signs of something unusual in the quiet rooms above. Mrs. Doughty, whom they found in the dining-room, answered their queries rather snappishly. "It was about time to expect a rumpus; and what else could come of taking in common folks' children who

hadn't a roof of their own? Brigham was down with a fever, and nobody knew what would come next, with Mrs. Thorne herself trotting round to wait on him."

"Mrs. Thorne!" exclaimed Kate in astonishment, tossing her hat and gloves on the table. "You must have lost your senses, Mrs. Doughty."

"Very well," replied that lady shortly, "you'll not be overstocked if you should find them;" and hearing the doctor come in, she swept into the hall to show him up-stairs.

"Mrs. Thorne!" repeated Kate, as the girls went out into the parlor. "I declare, I feel as Chicken Little must when he expected the immediate descent of the celestial bodies."

Lawtie crept off to one of the sofas, winking very hard to conceal the sleep veiling his bright eyes as the mist sometimes hides the glimmer of the lakelet among the hills.

"Mother heard God speak to-night," he said, laying his head on Kate's shoulder as she lifted him into her lap.

"The queer little darling!" said Kate, kissing him, "he is half asleep now."

"No, I am not," he replied, sitting quite upright; "mother began to work for God to-night; she never thought before how Jesus said to Peter, after he had asked him three times, you know, if he really, truly loved him, 'Feed my lambs and sheep,' — that means folks, you see. And then my Big'un was taken sick right away. Wasn't it funny? No, it wasn't either, because God can make things come all nice together, just as easy; but oh! I hope he doesn't want my Big'un to die now, 'cause he has never been forgiven, and he wouldn't have any white robe, 'cause nobody but Jesus could give him one, and you know he won't 'thout you ask him."

Kate did not reply, and in the silence that followed, Percy and Miss Seroy went up-stairs, and Lawtie's drooping eyelashes soon yielded passive obedience to the motion of Kate's rocker.

In a little while Mrs. Thorne and the doctor came down together. As they stood talking in the hall the door-bell rang, and Jefferson

brought back a telegram for Miss Seroy, which Mrs. Thorne bade him take up to her.

The doctor then turned to the dining-room, and was giving Mrs. Doughty more particular directions, when a series of shrieks rang through the hall, startling them all, and hastening them with pale faces to Miss Seroy's room, from which they seemed to proceed.

"It's that bit of paper done did it," affirmed Jefferson to his mistress, as they lifted Miss Seroy from the floor in violent hysterics.

"I'se never heard nothin' holler so's she did, quick as she sot her eyes on it. 'Spect it's somebody an't livin'."

That fear was lying dumb in each of their hearts, and lent sympathy to every face bending over Miss Seroy, as she lay apparently unconscious, with her disheveled hair floating over the rich silks and delicate laces. Percy, with her characteristic promptness, picked up the telegram, and read it aloud. With a feeling of relief the others heard the announcement that Miss Seroy's father had failed, and

had sent for her to come home. Kate, with a emphatic "pshaw!" left the room. The doctor gave an equally significant "humph!" and placed the glasses on the table with unnecessary force. It was not Dr. Lee, but corpulent, crusty Dr. Mint, with little sympathy for nerves. He turned to Mrs. Thorne.

"Haven't got through being glad at seeing you about again, Mrs. Thorne, nor wondering what under the heavens there is so interesting about that biped up-stairs, to have drawn out personal effort from you in his behalf; but I assure you there is nothing in this present case that need keep that pale face of yours off the pillow any longer; and unless you desire to be obliged to keep it on the pillow during a few months' siege, I should advise you to leave this howling piece of French finery to the care of the other misses, and put yourself into Mrs. Doughty's hands again." Miss Seroy had recommenced her groans.

An earnest look came into Mrs. Thorne's eyes. She tried to speak, but burst into tears instead.

Louise came forward, saying, "Mrs. Doughty is with Brigham; if I can serve Mrs. Thorne as well, and she will allow me ——"

"Very well, very well; only see her to bed; and the doctor bustled down stairs. Linking her arm in Louise's, Mrs. Thorne turned, with evident reluctance, to her own room.

"'He that hath not, from him shall be taken even that he hath,'" she said sadly, throwing herself on the lounge, and drawing a chair near it for Louise. "No wonder God closed my mouth to-night, when these lips have never besought a fellow-mortal to love him; but I did so want to tell Dr. Mint that the interest about Brigham was those words of our Lord, 'Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.' And I never felt that before, Miss Fay. It has been coming to me slowly, but it seemed last night as if Jesus of Nazareth himself passed by, and opened my blind eyes. Dr. Mint and brother Frank have never ceased urging me to return again to gay society as my only hope of restoration to health. I was sure that

would be spiritual death to me. I wanted nothing more of the world, forgetting that even Christ prayed not that his disciples should be taken out of the world. I thought I was all Christ's; alas! I was serving self, as devotedly as ever I served the world. Never, till last night, have I laid my sorrow at my Saviour's feet and left it there. I have hugged it to me, watered it with tears, and fostered it with memories; and God has graciously waited. He has sent me messages of late, through you and my precious child. I felt them all, but not till last night could I leave my dead and follow him, willing to forget the things which are behind. My husband!" and for a moment sobs choked her utterance,—"but it is the dearest, the treasure of our hearts, the Lord should have. I feel now he has my all, my life, myself. Poor Miss Seroy! why have I not spoken to her this winter of the treasure which neither moth nor rust can corrupt!"

In return, Louise told of her own self-reproaches the previous evening, because, busy about many things, she had thought so little

of the souls around her, "without God, and without hope in the world."

The mantel-clock rang out two silvery chimes as they talked, and Mrs. Thorne said, "Pleasant as it is, this is hardly wise, in those who purpose redeeming the time for the future. I ought not to have detained you, but my feeble resolve wanted sympathy. Now go to your rest immediately, for I have a better sedative to secure mine than Dr. Mint or Mrs. Doughty ever prepared."

Louise found Kate snugly ensconced in her place beside Percy, both having thought she would sleep with Mrs. Thorne.

"Who is with Miss Seroy?" asked Louise, as Kate rubbed her eyes and reluctantly offered to 'resign her situation."

"I gave her unlimited possession," returned Kate. "You know Cowper says, 'How sweet, how passing sweet, is solitude!'"

"You forget the next two lines," laughed Louise.

> "'But grant me still a friend in my retreat,
> Whom I may whisper, Solitude is sweet.'"

"I didn't fancy Prima Donna's style of whispering to-night," rejoined Kate, "but I suppose I'll have to resign and be resigned under the present circumstances."

"No, I can just as well go there myself," said Louise, "only don't let her think we are fair-weather friends, and not for a time of need."

"I never *did* like her, you know;" and Kate settled herself down cosily again. "I always believed she spoiled Nettie's picture, and always meant to find out, but I'll let that go in view of her misfortunes."

Louise bade them good-night, and opened Miss Seroy's door, assured by the unpleasant groans she heard that sleep had not yet brought to her the balm for trouble.

Miss Fielding was there, changing the cooling bandages, chafing her hands, and otherwise endeavoring to gratify the fretful demands of the unhappy girl upon the bed.

"How could she?" thought Louise, after having prevailed on her to give up the place to her. "How could she, with the physical suffer-

ing she continually endures herself, and after Miss Seroy has been so uniformly unkind and provoking. Ah! she never could but for *that*."

"But for what?" Kate would have asked had she overheard Louise's unfinished mental soliloquy. Yet to her the answer would but have deepened the enigma.

It was that Miss Fielding had been trying Lawtie's plan of praying "for them which despitefully use you."

CHAPTER XIII.

COAXED AND DRIVEN.

"The Shepherd sought his sheep ;
The Father sought his child."

MISS SEROY took her departure the next afternoon, notwithstanding the snow fell steadily the entire day. The girls, after sleep had restored their good-humor, were all kind and sympathizing, but she seemed to consider her misfortune an irretrievable disgrace, and would not look at it in any other light, not even after Uncle Paul had talked long and faithfully with her.

When she was fairly gone, Kate declared herself "immensely relieved," but had no idea of trying the sweets of solitude by night, so Janet must move directly into her room. Janet hesitated about leaving Miss Fielding so unceremoniously, whereupon Kate paid a visit to the latter and came back elated with having

obtained a cordial consent to her wishes; but Louise said it was too bad; Miss Fielding had so many wakeful nights, which must seem much longer when quite by herself.

Kate pouted, half in fun, half in earnest, and said, "If I was good now, like you, Lou, I should feel obliged to forego my own gratification in her behalf; but as it is, I get rid of all such disagreeable matters."

"Do you really get quite clear of *all* disagreeable feelings about such matters?" asked Louise, smiling, but looking very steadily at Kate.

"Bah! no; I suppose there will be a sort of something for ever tormenting me about it," said Kate frankly, with an impatient shrug of the shoulder, "but I have it; I'll ask Mrs. Doughty to sleep with her; you know her room is only across the hall now."

Mrs. Doughty consented in her usual grum manner, and no one could tell from Miss Fielding's pleasant face whether to her the arrangement was agreeable or not.

Brigham was no better for several days; for

the greater part of the time he lay in a stupor, with frequent intervals of delirium, when his half-articulate words would be mostly about his fear of death, and a wish that God wouldn't look at him so, although sometimes he would wander to his old home and talk of Jamie.

It may have been a better motive than admiration for Mrs. Thorne's personal effort and thoughtful kindness in promoting the comfort of the sick boy, that infused a similar spirit into each of her guests. It certainly went a great way with some of them, and there was no lack of attentive watchers by his bedside, day or night, although during the latter, old William, whose touch had become gentle as a woman's from so long tending of his much-loved plants, usually claimed the privilege. A dozen times a day would Lawtie's blue eyes peer into the half-open door, with the inquiry, "Will he know me now, mamma?" and when in the course of time Brigham did begin to amend rapidly, and could talk a few moments with his faithful friend, Lawtie's first question was, "You *do* thank God for getting you well,

don't you, my Big'un? and you did want your naughty soul doctored when you was sick, didn't you? and now you'll ask Jesus to heal all your sins, won't you, my Big'un?" But to Lawtie's surprise and disappointment, Brigham, with his old sullen expression, refused to answer; and as health slowly returned, Lawtie's pleadings and reproaches had no more effect upon him than formerly.

"But you wished you was good when you was sick, my Big'un," Lawtie would say, "so it wouldn't hurt to have God look at you so."

"'Spect I was scart then," would be the only reply vouchsafed, and even Lawtie's strong faith seemed to waver over the slow coming of the blessing for which he had prayed so earnestly and expected so surely. But one day he came tugging a large Bible to Louise, and laying it in her lap, pointed to the words, — "I waited patiently for the Lord, and he inclined unto me and heard my cry."

"Please find me the other verses by these letters, Miss Lou."

She found them, and read aloud,—

"Wait on the Lord: be of good courage."

"Rest in the Lord and wait patiently for him."

"I wait for the Lord, my soul doth wait, and in his Word do I hope."

"It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord."

"There, that'll do," interposed Lawtie. "What's the use of wanting God to say a thing over and over? If he says it once, he can't ever lie, you know, and he will make my Big'un good if only I don't get tired asking. But I don't see how it's good for a man to hope and wait. I do want my Big'un to get good, but it's real hard work to want it just as bad every time I pray,—it's been so long, Miss Lou."

"But Lawtie wants his perseverance and faith and love to God made stronger, doesn't he?" asked Louise, kissing him.

"And God knows the way to make it grow doesn't he?" said the child, running off to his play with a cheerful trust which Louise half envied.

Mrs. Thorne had resumed her proper place at the head of the table, doing its honors with a peculiar ease and simplicity, yet leading them all to feel that the conversation had a much higher tone than when they had laughed and chatted among themselves. Perhaps that was one of the many ways in which Mrs. Thorne's new life was to benefit others.

There had been fine sleighing since the unusually deep fall of snow, and Kate, who had grown very restless of late, was continually teasing "the cousins" or Uncle Paul to take them a longer ride than the short trips about town to which they had been limited. So Mr. Jennings delighted her one day with an invitation for them all to the farmhouse of a relative, some fifteen miles out, where he was sure of a warm welcome if she would risk the cold ride. "As if that ever kept one home from a sleigh-ride!" and Kate ran off to coax Mrs. Thorne to allow Lawtie to accompany them.

The day fixed upon was fair, but "cold as Greenland," Frank declared, stamping his feet on the steps to hasten the last movements of

the girls, and sending Percy back for something warmer than the worsted nonentity she had tied so becomingly over her ears with pink ribbons.

Janet and Percy, Uncle Paul and Lawtie, were tucked away under innumerable robes and afghans behind Frank's pair of spirited black horses, while Leonard assisted Miss Fielding and Louise and Kate into his less showy turn-out. They were all sorry that business detained Charlie at home. Mrs. Doughty brought out a whole armful of heated stones, and Mrs. Thorne, looking out with Brigham from an upper window, sent Jefferson down with her sable cloak and muff for Miss Fielding, whose health she was sure needed the extra protection.

How exhilarating it was to skim along over the smoothly-trodden way to the music of the bells and their own merry voices! Even when they were obliged to check their speed over the rough country roads, or in deep narrow cuts, through formidable embankments of snow, no less frequent peals of laughter sent

the sleek ears of the horses to and fro in quick attentive movements.

They reached the farmhouse about noon, with appetites keen enough to appreciate even the huge platter of "boiled victuals" gracing the center of the long dinner-table, upon which Kate looked in dismay, till she espied the brace of nicely-browned chickens lying in state at one end, and on the other Uncle Paul's favorite dish of baked beans and smoking corn-bread. No one scowled at the steel forks, or the necessity of using handkerchiefs for napkins, as the jolly farmer heaped their plates with the wholesome, nicely-prepared food, and his good wife urged upon them numberless smaller plates of pickles and preserves. Meanwhile two little girls cast very shy glances at the visitors, and whispered a great deal to sister Martha, just blooming into sixteen, who gave especial attention to Lawtie.

Dinner over, the farmer introduced the gentlemen to his well-stocked barn. Miss Fielding acquiesced in her hostess' desire that she would lie down in the little bed-room, whose

high feather-bed looked so inviting with its pretty patchwork counterpane. Kate made acquaintance with the little girls and the aged grandmother knitting in the chimney corner, to whose utterance still clung the "thee" and "thou" of Quaker ancestors. Louise took possession of the fresh towel upon which the dishes were to be dried, and begged to assist in that operation, as Martha's rosy fingers passed them in and out of the steaming water. Very reluctantly the girl consented. Evidently she considered such employment quite unsuitable for the fine city lady she took Louise to be.

"If she could see me in the old kitchen at home, what a sudden transformation her exalted opinion of me would undergo!" thought Louise, "and how true it is that we are oftener estimated by what we appear to possess than what we ourselves really are. Now if Mrs. Trahammon should know of my humble home, farewell at once to her honeyed speeches and flattering attentions. Heigho! how queer it is!" and busy over such moralizing, she forgot

to be social, and so, by her silence, confirmed poor Martha's opinion of the aristocratic reserve of city people.

They were to start homeward at four, but when the gentlemen came in, Uncle Paul asked the girls what they should say to taking the drive home by moonlight, "because," he continued, "there is to be a prayer-meeting at the old school-house close by this evening, and cousin Joseph is anxious that Leonard and myself should remain."

"That's what I am," said the old farmer, piling his armful of wood on the andirons so that the red flame might find the interstices most readily. "There's but a few of us old Christians, at the most, to say a word, and it would be a mighty good lift to the meeting if the folks hereabouts could hear what the Spirit of God has been doin' among you. I've set my mind on't ever sence you writ of coming." No one objected, although Percy looked doubtfully at Frank; and Uncle Paul, considering the matter settled, walked along into the "best room,"

without noticing Kate's remark that "sleighing by moonlight was double the fun, even with the prayer-meeting thrown in."

Grandma heard it, however, and sticking her knitting-needle into its sheath, she said, tenderly, "Did thee mean that, little one? and doesn't thee like prayer-meetings?"

Kate shook her head, but, with her usual impulsiveness, sat down on the cricket at the old lady's feet, and caressed the withered hand lying upon her lap.

"What will thee do, then, at that great prayer-meeting which all God's people will hold after the Judge has said, 'Come, ye blessed'?"

"Do you believe the people in heaven do nothing but sing and sit up straight, just as they used to make children keep Sunday?" asked Kate.

"Nay, thee isn't right there," was the reply; "and did thee ever think the sitting straight up was keeping Sunday? Thee'll never find a good mother but knows the hands and feet alone can't remember the Sabbath day to keep

it holy; she'll help the little hearts to think and listen about good things, and the hands and feet jine in, never fear; and most afore Satan knows it, they'll be loving Sunday best of all the seven, if the mother does. So 'tis about the prayer-meeting and heaven; the heart must be fixed right, afore either place will be a delight."

"If ever I went to heaven," said Kate slowly, "I supposed the feeling would come all right of itself."

"Thee hasn't heerd parson Jewel preach as often as I have from the text, 'In the place where the tree falleth, there it shall lie.' If thee doesn't like to talk and think about God down here, how will thee like to stay with him up there? Isn't it most likely our hearts will go right on loving what we have loved most in this world?"

"But when people are converted just before they die," returned Kate, "they must have been loving other things most, and there isn't much time to twist their hearts about then."

"I know," said the old lady, "and then we

rejoice that God is so great and merciful, for we know with God all things are possible, and there is no telling what wonders he may work in their hearts if they really ask him, even at the very last minit."

"But it allers seemed to me that waiting till your death-bed to git convarted was a dreadful resky business," interrupted the farmer, who had been washing his hands at the sink, and now passed them on his way to the "settin'-room."

Kate looked thoughtful. "I think it would be easier to be good out here in the country," she said, "where there isn't so much going on to keep you gay and excited or tired and cross all the time."

"I've heerd many say that," was Grandma's reply, "but thee'll find it a mistake. Satan an't perticular what sort of things he makes use of to tempt ye, and takes mostly that that's handiest; and the nearer thee has got to heaven, the busier he'll be. Thee must have the inside wound up right, and it'll run most any wheres, though thee musn't expect to

keep always the same motion. If there's a fog in the medder, or thee has eaten too much dinner, and this body of ours gits to bothering us, why, maybe we can't hardly hear the soul tick.

"I've seen folks in a dreadful tew: they knew Satan had stopped the hull concern, and they'd jest quit prayin' and take to groanin'. Now, if we jest keep on with the *duties*, believing God's the same yesterday to-day and for ever, the feelin' will come right by and by; it is certain as can be, if God has got fast hold of us,— that last is a great thing in my mind. Now sometimes we catch tight hold of him, and we tug and pull to keep hold, but it an't no use; in a little while down we go, and have to creep along in the mud till we ask Jesus to pick us up. Now thee may think ninety years a long time to learn wisdom; but I can say with the old patriarch, "Few and evil have the days of the years of my life been,' for it took, most all of 'em to learn me that we must let God keep hold of us. If we are only willing, he'll take hold, jest like a Father, and never, never let go."

Kate walked slowly away to the window, and seeing the farmer's boys initiating Lawtie into the delights of coasting, she threw on her shawl and ran out to join in their frolics.

The old lady resumed her knitting with a patient sigh. She never knew that Miss Fielding, lying in the little bed-room, had listened to those last remarks with a grateful sense of relief that her tired, helpless life might thus rest itself entirely on the Infinite Arm.

After tea they all walked over to the schoolhouse together. It was an unpainted building, standing under a hill, and but a step from the roadside, with very high windows, too high to be of any use to the children, who sat, day after day, on the hard, straight seats underneath, swinging their numb feet to the monotonous buzzing of their lips.

Kate whispered to Louise, after they were seated, that "probably the builders had a twofold object in locating it so near the street, with such inaccessible means of gazing thereupon: the children, endeavoring to gratify the desire to see what was going on outside, would stretch

at such a rate as to develop into men of stature in much less time than would otherwise be required; while the continued fruitlessness of such endeavors would strengthen and develop their moral acumen, patience, perseverance, etc."

Louise only smiled. Her heart was full of the purpose for which they had come, as she noted the look of gentle seriousness upon the faces of men, women, and children filling up the seats around them. Kate's words, however, turned her attention more directly to the low, smoky ceiling, the uncouth stove, and the cheerlessness of the entire room, so dimly lighted by a row of tallow candles on the table. Probably the tempter used them to good advantage, as pioneers to his own suggestions, giving her a dissatisfied consciousness that Janet would turn away in disgust from a religion that could find any thing attractive to do or enjoy there. Indeed, how could they hope to convince any one to whose taste art and wealth had ever ministered, that amid such unfavorable surroundings could be realized a

truer happiness than from the mirth and music of the tapestried drawing-rooms, — that then and there could be found the pearl of greatest price? Doubt, ever at hand, questioned, *Is* it possible?

Ah! the Father doth hold his children with unforgetful care; for was it not his, that still, small voice that made answer, — "The world passeth away, and the lust thereof, but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever?" It is the glory of One alone, that he accepts the worship of his children alike from gilded temple or mud-walled hut; and so the matter had straightened itself in Louise's mind before Uncle Paul's low words, "Let us pray," banished every thing but the thought of Him who had promised to be in the midst of them.

But after the prayer and one familiar hymn, there was a long pause. Either the few accustomed to sustain the meeting felt embarrassed by the presence of so many strangers, or were waiting to give them the precedence. So Uncle Paul rose, and in his peculiarly happy manner related some incidents of the reli-

gious interest in R——. The room was very still, and not a few moistened eyes testified to the earnestness of his closing appeal to their individual consciences.

But another pause followed. For herself Louise did not mind it, her heart was so full of happy reflections, but she could see from Janet's restlessness that to her it was exceedingly irksome. Perhaps Miss Fielding noticed it too, and gained courage to commence, in a very sweet but trembling voice, the hymn —

"Just as I am, without one plea,"

and then full and clear rose the melody, as if every voice had taken it up, till even Kate's eye sparkled in appreciative delight.

Miss Fielding's effort was not lost. No sooner did the last note die away than one and another knelt in prayer, just as they were, rough in manners, unpolished in speech, but sincere in heart, offering prayers whose simplicity of purpose and largeness of desire made ample amends for their plainness of language.

There were no other pauses. The old farm-

er, with an unsteady voice, declared that God must have sent his Spirit with these friends so opportunely among them. What else could have so warmed their hearts and opened their mouths?

It was not until near the close that Leonard found opportunity to speak; but then he pleaded with the impenitent as one who feared to stand before his Maker with the blood of souls upon his garments. After him, just as Uncle Paul rose to conclude the meeting, a very rough-looking man begged leave to say a few words. Janet's disgust was plainly evinced as he began, —

"You know last week the deacon read us about Christ bein' the Shepherd, an' seein' as how I've kept sheep these twenty years, I kin understand better all that means. Now, one time in particular, I recollect I wanted to get my sheep and cattle out of an old bare pastur', where there wa'n't skasely a spear o' grass, into a field I'd jest fenced in for 'em full of as sweet clover as ye ever smelled. Some on 'em went right along, and most allers they'll all

foller, whether it's for good or bad; but they didn't jest seem to get the hang on't that time, and I had to coax like and pull some of the leetle ones along, an' finally there was tew or three I couldn't fetch in no how, till me an' the boy had cut some sticks an' laid about right smart with 'em. Now, it did seem kinder hard to hurt 'em so, but I shouldn't wonder if, arter they'd made straight for them bars and got a bit of that clover, they wished I'd a done it afore; and it 'pears to me how God does that same thing when we won't be coaxed nor druv by any lovin' ways. An' as I was a settin' here to-night in this meetin', so full of light and warmth, it seemed as if the good Shepherd was a coaxin' us to come into his clover-fields. We've had the door p'inted out, an' he said, 'My sheep will hear my voice an' foller me.' Now, be we his sheep or not? an' will we go right along, or will we wait till we git hit somehow, or won't we never git inter that blessed fold?"

As the man drew his coat-sleeves across his eyes and sat down, Leonard began to sing—

"I was a wandering sheep,"

but there were a few sobs easily heard through the whole hymn, and every eye except Kate's fastened itself on Uncle Paul as he added a few more words of counsel and entreaty before giving out the closing hymn —

"For ever with the Lord."

Even after that was sung every one seemed reluctant to leave the place while the echo of those last sweet lines still lingered —

"We nightly pitch our moving tent
A day's march nearer home."

"'Tis a mercy to have that taken from us which takes us from God,'" said Miss Fielding to Louise, as they walked home together. "It seemed to me, when the old man was speaking, that I was conscious of a new meaning in those words of the Lord to his servant,— "Go, compel them to come in,' and saw, as never before, the love that not only invites, but constrains us oftentimes to enter the fold. Who can feel that better than I?"

Louise did not answer. She was thinking

of Kate, who just behind them was provoking merry peals of laughter from Frank and Percy with her droll speeches. It seemed to Louise that she had never seen her so wild and reckless in her gayest moods, and she wondered how she should be able to carry out a resolution, just formed, of speaking to her of these "better things" during their ride home.

The moon only threw out a fitful gleam of light, now and then, through masses of clouds drifting uneasily over the heavens.

"It looks amazingly like snow," said the old farmer. "If cousin Paul is wise he'll let the horses stay where they are, and wait till morning for the rest of the jaunt."

But they all objected to that. Mrs. Thorne would be so anxious about Lawtie, and very likely the storm would not break before to-morrow. So the horses were led up to the stoop, where Martha waited with the stones all nicely heated. Lawtie was transferred from the lounge, where he had been sleeping all the evening, to Janet's lap, wrapped in a warm afghan, and

Frank spoke soothingly to his restive horses while the others were getting nicely arranged in their respective places.

Just then Kate sprang out of Leonard's sleigh, declaring she was not going to ride with such sober people, and Uncle Paul must change seats with her. Besides, she wanted to help Frank drive, — those horses were feeling so nicely.

Uncle Paul cast a look at Frank's fine, athletic form, as he stood with an arm thrown carelessly over the neck of his favorite horse, and took the vacated seat beside Leonard, saying, with a smile, "I guess I can risk him to keep the horses under, even with such a chatter-box behind;" and, with many thanks to the hospitable household they were leaving, they drove away, just as a few flakes of snow sifted down from the accumulating clouds.

For a while the party kept so near together as to exchange a remark occasionally; but at length, with a merry "good-bye" from Kate, Frank's sleigh sped rapidly forward, out of sight and hearing.

The storm steadily increased, and the rising wind began to drive the snow into their faces, but, protecting Louise and Miss Fielding as much as possible with the extra shawls and robes, Leonard urged the horses on, as fast as was practicable, through the darkness, Uncle Paul's familiarity with the way doing them good service amid the bewildering drifts.

"I hope Frank will not mistake at some of these corners, and unnecessarily lengthen his drive," he said more than once as a gust of wind would make them draw farther down into their coat-collars. But home was reached at last, and the jaded horse stood passively while Uncle Paul and Leonard deposited the girls quite inside the hall door, where Jefferson, Mrs. Doughty, and Mrs. Thorne met them.

"Well!" said the housekeeper, in as cross a tone as her evidently relieved mind could assume, "so you are all safe home, at last."

"Last I suppose we are," said Leonard, laughing, "but not least, I trust."

"If you are last it's according to the Bible way of it,' interrupted Mrs. Doughty, "'the

last shall be first;' for there's been no other arrival here to-night."

Louise sank into a chair, trembling with cold and a sudden foreboding of something wrong. Uncle Paul turned to Mrs. Thorne, whose pallid lips could hardly shape the words, —

"Frank — Lawtie — my precious boy — are they not with you?"

He led her into the parlor, saying, "Do not be alarmed; they started with us, but drove faster. Very possibly they have stopped somewhere for the night, for we spoke of it; or they may have missed their way, and so perforce must enjoy the storm a little longer."

He spoke cheerily, but his eye sought Leonard's with an anxious look, as if not liking to think of other possibilities, and followed him into the hall as the other went hastily out.

"You are not going back?" he inquired, closing the inside door after them.

"It was my first intention," replied Leonard, "but a second thought, of course, shows its uselessness; and I see Jefferson has already taken the horse round to the stable."

"It was very thoughtful in him; you have been exposed so long to the storm. And the others, — we must wait and pray for their safe coming."

In the parlor the girls were making an effort to swallow the tea Mrs. Doughty had prepared for them; but it was simply an impossibility, and ended, on Miss Fielding's part, with a very hysterical burst of tears, and she was obliged to yield to their entreaties, and go up to her own room, followed by the housekeeper with bottles of hot water and piles of blankets. Uncle Paul advised the others to try and sleep, but did not urge what he felt too well would be utterly impossible; only, when Mrs. Thorne began to pace the length of the parlors, with her hands tightly clasped behind her, he knelt down, saying, "Let us commit our dear ones to Him who never sleepeth, and *trust* him."

Louise felt her heart lightened as they rose from their knees, although tears would start whenever she thought that of those absent ones. Only Lawtie had heard the Saviour say, "Fear not, for I have redeemed thee; thou art mine."

Oh, the lost opportunities, when she might have spoken a word to Kate, or urged Percy to think less of the world! There was one thing to comfort her. Never, since that unhappy Christmas, had she omitted the names of her companions from her morning and evening prayer; and prayer was no form to Louise. She believed God's promises to be yea and amen in Christ Jesus.

Uncle Paul and Leonard tried to maintain a cheerful conversation, to hide, if possible, the dreary wailing of the wind; but Mrs. Thorne paid no heed to it. She had resumed her steady walk, and by and by, as if that was not sufficient to control her nervous restlessness, she passed quickly out into the hall. Louise heard her ascend the stairs, and waited anxiously for her return. She could not bear to have her enduring the suspense alone, and at last followed her, fearing she could not tell what. The door of her room stood open, but no one was within; and becoming still more alarmed, Louise was hastening down, when a low sound from above caught her ear,

and led her up the next flight instead. The door of Janet's studio was open. A beautiful picture of Lawtie, just completed, was upon her easel. It was intended for a gift to Mrs. Thorne, and had easily been kept secret, as the latter never visited that part of the house. Janet had succeeded in catching upon canvas his look and attitude, his forefinger laid lightly on his lips, as he was wont whenever hearing or telling any thing especially interesting. The eyes combined their half-dreamy, half-roguish expression, and in the dim light cast upon it from the hall-lamp the picture seemed stepping out of the dark shadows behind, a living, breathing reality.

Before it knelt the mother, her black dress so lost in the surrounding gloom that only the gleam of her colorless face and the clasped hands upon the chair were visible. But the uplifted countenance had lost the trace of anguished fear. The yearning look upward alone bespoke the anxious heart, for upon the lips lingered a half-smile so touchingly submissive that Louise whispered to herself as she glided

hastily away, — "My peace I give unto you, not as the world giveth." It seemed as if her rash foot had intruded where his ministering spirits alone should tread.

Hardly had she reached the parlor, when the sound of bells, suddenly heard and as suddenly silent, sent them all to the door, which Jefferson had already flung wide open. What a relief it was to hear Frank's cheery "All right," and how quickly Lawtie's tired head was nestling on his mother's shoulder, and her tender fingers chafing the little chilly hands creeping around her neck, while Louise relieved the girls of their wet outside garments, and Leonard drew chairs for them near the registers! Mrs. Doughty came hurrying up from the kitchen, tea-pot in hand, the contents of which were her sovereign balm for all mental and physical troubles.

"That's right," exclaimed Frank, rubbing his hands briskly together, and drawing forward a small round table; "I hope a cup of tea will loosen the girls' tongues somewhat, for they have scarcely vouchsafed me a word since

we came near writing the 'finis' to our history. Just bring on a plate of sandwiches now, and allow us to help the inner man into a more comfortable condition, and then we'll relate the various incidents and accidents of our homeward trip. What's that you are saying, Nettie? that I couldn't have heard you in such a howling storm? Oh, I thought it was that other series of screams which had quite disabled your vocal organs!"

Janet laughed merrily at his pleasantry, but Percy grew pale and turned a glance upon the speaker, in which Louise, with a sigh, read a plain denial of her hope that Percy cared *only* for Frank's wealth and position. So many unpleasant memories were suggested thereby, that she became equally oblivious to Frank's continued raillery and Mrs. Doughty's energetic clatter of the plates, till she was aroused by Kate's pushing back her untasted cup of tea and asking to be excused. She followed the latter into the hall, only to have her offer, both of assistance and company, declined.

"No, Lou, I don't want even you just now.

I want to be alone. There, kiss me, and don't worry. I think I never felt better, — in this way, I mean; but I can't tell you now;" and she hastened away.

Louise re-entered the parlor, where Frank was already explaining their detention. "After we left you, the horses were so determined to have it all their own way I was obliged to give my whole attention to them, and consequently did not observe that we took the wrong road at the very first turn, — the road that leads off, as we afterwards discovered, to Cut-in-two hill, that steep embankment close under which the river runs. I remember sailing up to it once a few years ago. Well, the first we knew, or didn't know, of our situation, the horses came to a standstill, and no urging or coaxing of mine could move them an inch. Vexed a little, I sprang out of the sleigh, and after sinking long enough to have reached the bottom of any common-sized drift, concluded 'twas time to catch hold of something. That I chanced to find in the shape of a stout bush, and by clinging tightly, and treading the snow

gently, I managed to maintain my position till the screams, which the girls had kept up with commendable perseverance, brought us assistance. I did not much fancy my own ignominious resting-place, and wasn't sorry to hail the friendly light of the lantern, which, truth to tell, did not reveal to us the most agreeable of situations. Will you believe it, — those horses had stopped on the very verge of that sharp descent, so near that had my leap been a trifle more vigorous, I might have rolled quite into the turbid waters below, instead of hanging, like an opossum, from a lithe sapling."

There were other pale faces beside Percy's, but Louise saw only that.

"I saw at once," continued Frank, "that a single misdirected movement of the horses might send the sleigh over the edge of the cliff; but at a word the girls tumbled out of the sleigh as rapidly as I could desire; and the light of the lantern enabling me to use my natural agility to advantage, I reached the horses in time to prevent any further catas-

trophe, except the breaking of the harness in turning. With that ended the tragical part of our adventure; for I fancy even the girls could hardly clothe with romance the subsequent events, as the old man who, having bethought himself of some neglected creature at the barn, was on his way thither when his ear caught the mellifluous screeches of the fair ones under my charge, insisted on depositing them in the kitchen of his old homestead and raking open the fire before he would provide ropes and strings to mend the harnesses. Then he must needs rout out his son from some attic dormitory, to precede us on horseback till we were on the right track, else was it very doubtful whether you ever listened to this recital."

All this while, Lawtie had fastened a steady gaze upon Frank, and as the latter paused, he lifted his head from his mother's shoulder, and turning his face to hers, asked earnestly, —

"What would you have said, mamma, if I had never, *never*, come back?"

She kissed him fondly once, twice, and

then in a low tone, meant for his ear alone, and God's, replied, "I *did* say, 'God knows best.'"

The child bounded from her lap, and standing before her with his finger on his lip, and the very expression of the picture, said joyously, "And it was God, trying you just as he did Abraham, wasn't it? You didn't know but he meant you should give me up, for good and for ever, and have no little boy down here to love, but *you did*, and then I guess God said, 'Now I know — ,what did he say to Abraham? Do tell me, Miss Lou." And Louise repeated, almost reverently, "Now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, from me.'"

"And then he let us all come back, didn't he?" said Lawtie, clapping his hands, "and oh! I love him so; don't you, mamma?"

For answer, she drew him on her lap again, and smiled a sweet smile, so full of meaning that Frank, looking thoughtfully from her to Louise, grew suddenly silent; and after Uncle Paul and Leonard had bidden them good-night,

and the girls had gone up-stairs, leaving them alone, he drew his chair close beside hers, and said, with a look of affection, "How bravely you bore the anxiety and suspense of to-night; and how much you seem like the sister Bertha of our younger days, only a trifle paler and graver! I shall expect soon to see you the observed of all observers, as you were wont to be."

She laid her hand on his shoulder, as she replied, "Is that the best wish you have for me, brother Frank?"

"I suppose you think I might be satisfied to enjoy this return of your former self, without wishing its fragrance wasted on the careless multitude," he said, evasively.

"Nay, rather would I have you rejoice that this weak, sinful self, with God's help, is to be spent in his service. Oh, Frank, the religion I sought, and believed I found, in those dark hours, made me only ready and anxious to die; no wonder you turned from it and me. My eyes were only half opened. Now, thank God, I see, and would hencefoth recognize my Sa-

viour's voice in the bidding, 'Follow me,' as well as in the promise, 'I will sustain thee, and strengthen thee, and comfort thee.' It was this alone that made me brave to-night: it is this that, while it may not prevent clouds from covering our earthly horizon, will lead us safely, even joyously, on to the eternal sunlight beyond. Frank, dear brother Frank, will you not seek this?"

He turned from her, and slowly paced the room, as she had done a few hours before.

"I will not deny, Bertha, that this present life sometimes fails to satisfy, or that thoughts of the future will sometimes intrude. I wrote you of my friend Peyton, beside whose death-bed I stood alone, in Dresden. I had frequently rallied him on his natural nervous shrinking from danger or pain; you know I always admired an heroic indifference to the one, and an unblenching endurance of the other. But I felt that I should have been the coward and he the fearless veteran, had death grappled with us both, that summer's day. No one could doubt its reality to him, as he

talked of the glorious inheritance awaiting him in his Father's house. Holding my hand in his, he seemed to lead me with him to the very confines of the other world; and then, as calmly as if we were parting for an hour, he left me; and I went back to the busy, deceitful world, by far the worse off of the two, I suppose; but I am tired and nervous;" and pausing beside the table, he poured out a glass of water. Oh, the perverse human heart, thirsting for the water of life it will not seek, — mistrusting the fading treasures it will not relinquish!

"Religion may do well enough for the dying hour, or for sorrow like yours, Bertha," he continued, setting down the glass impatiently, "but I do not relish what it demands of this life. Am I not happy enough without it? I do not understand its mysteries; I can not feel my sinfulness as the Bible describes it; I do not love that Jesus whose requirements are in such direct opposition to the desires of my heart. And now, Bertie dear, not another word to-night, or this morning rather;" and he took

the sleeping boy from her arms and carried him up-stairs.

There were tears in her eyes as he kissed her "Good-night" at the door of her room, and detaining him a moment she said earnestly, "No, brother Frank, you are not happy enough, and you must not wait to make your own feelings right; only —

> 'Trust *Him* for grace, and strength, and love,
> And all thy troubles end.
> Oh, come to Jesus and you'll find
> In him a living Friend.' "

How like was this to the hymn he had received from Louise! For a long, long time sleep had not the power to drive from his thoughts the repetition of those two lines,

> "They who once His kindness prove
> Find it everlasting love."

CHAPTER XIV.

OPENING THE DOOR.

"In the silent midnight watches,
List — thy bosom door!
How it knocketh, knocketh, knocketh,
Knocketh evermore!" — BISHOP COXE.

ON awaking the next morning, Louise consulted her watch and found it very late; but she could hear no one stirring, and with that delicious sense of comfort which haunts one's pillow while the passing hours of daylight chant their monotonous call, 'Duty, duty *waiting* for you,' she lay still, dreamily recalling past events, or thinking of the busy life at home, whose daily routine had begun hours before. But there was danger of losing her quiet time in the library, and with the first breath of the frosty morning vanished all that mesmeric influence that holds us prisoners often after we have known how easily it can be dissipated; and very shortly by that pleasant library win-

dow Louise was feasting her soul on those sublime words, "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?"

A gentle rap on the door, and Kate entered. She drew a chair beside Louise, who was looking her surprise at the interruption.

"I knew you were here; I could not stay away, for I want to learn how to follow Jesus."

Something in her tone and countenance bespoke one who had already touched the hem of Christ's garment, rather than the anxious seeker for the place of his abode; and Louise said inquiringly, "You have given him your heart?"

Kate clasped her hands upon the open Bible and with tearful eyes looked into her companion's face.

"I have given myself to Him for ever. Oh, Louise," and she covered her eyes with her clasped hands, "didn't that old man describe my case exactly last night? Didn't I see how, all winter, God had held wide open the door for me, showing the still waters beside which you were abiding? Hasn't he pleaded with

me again and again, and I turned willfully away? Didn't I hear him speak in those rough words last night? and I said again, I will not come. And then when we came so near to death—just think, Lou, only an inch between us and a dreadful death!—it seemed as if, with the light of the lantern exposing that danger to us, came a sudden sense of deserving it all, even death, which would have banished me from the fold for ever! And with it came so deep a feeling of the great love that had spared me! Could it be the door was still held open, when that very night I had hardened my heart to Christ's pleadings? I lost sight of God entirely; I saw only the good Shepherd,—him who gave his own life for the sheep, for me! The girls thought I was sleeping when I laid my head on the old kitchen table and asked Jesus to lead me into his own green pastures. Am I bold, is it wrong, Louise, for me to believe that then and there I found my Saviour?"

It seemed like a dream to Louise, to feel, as

it were, in her outstretched hand, one of the blessings she had come hither to seek. She could hardly find voice to reply, "He always says, 'Come *now*,' dear Kate; he never bids us wait."

They talked together till the breakfast-bell rang, and then went out arm in arm. Percy and Janet were already in the dining-room making themselves merry with Frank over the previous night's incidents. Louise was indignant at such undue levity, but Kate laid her hand on Janet's arm with a gentle, "Please Nettie, don't speak lightly of what brought death so near us."

Perhaps they felt the quiet influence of her tone and look, so unlike her usual manner, and half-divined its cause, or perhaps it was Mrs. Thorne's immediate entrance which prevented any reply, and the conversation wandered on various topics till breakfast was concluded. Then Frank pushed back his chair with the remark, "Upon my word, Kate, our misadventure of yesterday has shaken all the life

out of you. You don't seem exactly sleepy or grum, but evidently something has come over the spirit of your dream."

Louise looked quickly at Kate. The latter stood leaning on the back of her chair, very pale, with her eyes cast down.

"Don't jest, Frank, I wanted to tell you all," she replied, speaking low and fast. "It was really new life to me. You remember the old man that spoke last at the meeting? I felt every word he said, but you very well know how I tried to banish all serious impressions, and I should have succeeded if God had not shown me death almost face to face. No, Janet, I wasn't frightened into it. It was the love that spared me, and still said, 'Come.' I could not refuse that, and I am so glad I gave Jesus my heart then. I have wandered so long; now I know what the love of Christ means."

Janet and Percy left the room in silence, followed by Louise. Mrs. Thorne lingered to leave a kiss upon Kate's brow, and bestow a

pleading look upon Frank as she passed him. The latter remained looking out of the window till Kate had reached the door, then he spoke her name. She turned back to him.

"What will you do, Katie, with all the gay pleasures you love?" he asked. "Must you think with Miss Fay that it is a sin to dance and to do a thousand other delightful things?"

"I shall ask God, as she does," replied Kate, "to show me what is right and best for me; and if to follow him I have to walk differently from the world, as I do think Christians ought, why, I must trust him for strength as I have for forgiveness. The pain and denial will be but for a little while, Frank. In heaven it will be only joy to say,—'As thou wilt.'"

"Pshaw!" exclaimed Frank, running his fingers through his hair. "You talk as if you had been a Christian for years. I thought it was something they learned to repeat."

"I think God's Spirit puts it into our hearts," she said, softly.

"There's another thing I don't like," re-

turned Frank. "If God is to make us willing by his Spirit, as they say, why not wait till he does, and not trouble ourselves about it?"

"I can not explain that," was Kate's reply, "but last night it was enough for me to know I needed something, and that something Christ alone could give. I was glad to go to him for it, and how strange it seems that I have waited so long!"

That was the end of the conversation.

Afterwards, when Louise commended Kate for that open avowal of her change of feelings, saying, half-enviously, "I am afraid I could not have done it," the latter replied, — "Your life speaks plainly enough, Lou. It has tormented me greatly. My giddy tongue has much to make amends for, and in telling them I think God helped to do it, and he must help me, for at home I shall have no one else. Mother will 'phoo!' at me, and Mab will laugh, and father will say, 'Do just as you like, child,' which means, 'Don't trouble me about it,' and I shall be all alone. I must keep close to the good Shepherd, — no, I mean

he must keep close to me. You see the dear grandma's words didn't go out of the other ear, as I meant they should. Her sweet little 'thee's' must have stuck them fast, but who would have thought I should so soon be willing and glad to have Christ lead me? Oh, Lou! you must pray every day of your life that he will hold me fast."

And so, joyfully, hopefully, tremblingly, Kate began the 'new life.'

A letter came for Percy that day. Her mother was ill, and felt obliged to urge her immediate return home. Louise would have accompanied her, but Kate was anxious she should go on a little further with her music; and, besides, she must stay as long as they did, and Janet's lessons would not be through for three weeks. So Percy bade them a very reluctant adieu, feeling, as she glanced at Uncle Paul's card while packing, that having so nearly gained the whole world she coveted, she would give much to be equally sure she had not lost her own soul.

After that the others led rather a quiet life;

Miss Fielding confined to her room most of the time since the night of the storm, and Kate spending the larger part of each day with her, a tender, thoughtful nurse, a loving, sympathizing friend. The evenings in the parlor or music room became more homelike with Mrs. Thorne among them, although Frank's calls were shorter and less frequent.

And what had Janet to say of those recent events? Nothing at all; nor would she hear a word from Louise or Kate on the subject of religion. Of course they did not press the matter, but, unknown to her, each morning in the library knelt the two friends, where but one had knelt before, bearing with earnest faith her name before Him who said, "If two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven."

"Mais, Mademoiselle, your hand will have been vee-ry unsteady this morning," Monsieur Peren came to say more and more frequently. "It makes not good for you to hold de late hours."

And Janet, with a smile, would assure him that late hours were the exception rather than the rule with her.

No one but herself mistrusted the truth that wakeful nights were becoming rather the rule than the exception since she had very gladly given Kate permission to room with Louise after Percy's departure, lest she should detect her uneasiness and divine its cause; and not even she herself could tell precisely how that uneasiness began. She only knew that slowly, but very surely, she was drifting from her old moorings, without any fixed idea to what she should anchor instead; that she was becoming strangely dissatisfied with her father's faith, in which she had grown up, and could not or would not see with what to replace it. She had faithfully complied with Uncle Paul's request, till the verse on her card had become familiar as household words, "There is no other name given under heaven among men, whereby we must be saved," and that thirteenth chapter of first Corinthians, to which the little talisman had also referred her. How many hours she had

lain awake, thinking over his wondrous message of inculcated love! In her morning reading of it, she could not tell why, but whenever she laid her own practice and principles in the opposite balance, she would invariably turn back to the first chapter of Matthew's gospel to read, "Thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins."

The three girls went up-stairs together one night, and stood talking of various matters a few moments before separating. Then Kate kissed Janet, with a look of yearning love the latter had learned how to interpret, and following Louise into their room, stopped on the threshold to say, — "It seems lonely to-night, with Miss Fielding so unwell, and the rain beating steadily on the windows, as if it ignored the existence of nerves, or the need of sleep. Let's have our doors open; 'twill be more social, and we shall sleep better, to say the least."

Louise laughed at the idea of sociability in sleep, whereupon Kate began chasing her round the room with the pillows, and Janet

with a sigh passed into her own room alone, and sitting down by the table, leaned her head upon her hand.

She was tired of this inward debate; she must decide upon something. Should the self within, proud of its divine origin and future attainments, bow down before this Nazarene, and humbly sue for pardon and life at his hands? She had been taught that a perfect life is the true and only service God requires; that she should do good for goodness' sake, needing no pardon for sin, but finding in herself her redeemer, her salvation, her heaven. She had thought of that "one Name" as of any other legend of some soul "lifted by its hidden strength or the power of circumstances above its fellows;" of the Christian Bible as melodic poetry, not inspiration. But of late, in her more careful searching of the Scriptures, its simple truths had stirred the depths of her own soul. In them she found an ideal of holy living before which her previous conception faded into dimness; a curse, too, resting upon those who came short of it, but a

curse removed by faith in Him who bore it for us. But what was faith? Something evidently that could take the lowliest stalk, and graft upon it a plant of heavenly growth, the fruits of which she had seen in those Christian lives around her, — not perfect lives, but lives consecrated to his service who shall one day "present them faultless before the presence of his glory, with exceeding joy." That was Christianity.

But this absolute religion, had it any where lifted the noblest-born soul up to the standard of the Christ of ages ago? Could it exhibit the smallest circle of humanity purified and free from the scum of selfishness and vice? What had it ever accomplished in an untrodden wilderness, where Christianity had not leveled a path and cleared a settlement? Following in the footsteps of the latter, perchance it might now and then rear beautiful fabrics, but what did it help poor souls to accomplish with a natural poverty of material? And which was the greater partiality in God, to bestow upon some greater mental powers and

advantages whereby they may stand nearer to him in their self-purified lives, or for him to open one way, and declare "*Whosoever will* may come." But to come she must confess herself a needy sinner, whose good deeds were of no value, — must take as a gift what she would gladly work out in her own proud strength. Ah! *that* was the insurmountable obstacle. Never, never could she do that. She went to the mirror, and began undoing her hair, trying to consider the matter settled. But upon the bureau lay a small package of tracts, left there by Louise that day; and upon the first her eye fell on these words, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock." She took it up mechanically, and read here and there a line: — "A royal Guest with his hands full of royal blessings;" "the Lord of all worlds pleads for a home in your heart;" "he knows your great need is an indwelling Saviour;" "He is loth to go away;" "Oh, let him in, and you shall have sweet companionship with him here, and a wonderful heirship with him in heaven."

She had left her own door ajar, lest the girls,

hearing her open it at so late an hour, should wonder what had occupied her so long, and as she stood there irresolute, she was startled by Kate's clear ringing voice floating through the silent hall, — "You have opened the door, haven't you, Nettie?"

The affirmative answer rose to her lips, but with such a double meaning that she could not utter it aloud. Again she cast her eye upon that last sentence she had read. In a moment she had fallen upon her knees by her bedside, and angels were bearing heavenward the utterance of a humbled heart. To earthly ears it was inaudible. Kate, waiting for a reply, heard only the half-inarticulate moan that preceded it, and rousing Louise they went with hurried steps and anxious inquiry to learn its meaning. Janet lifted her head to say firmly, tremblingly, — "I have opened the door, and I feel that my Lord has come in."

Would Louise and Kate ever doubt again whether God answers prayer?

CHAPTER XV.

FRANK.

"God's saints are shining lights: who stays
Here long must passe
O'er hills, swift streams, and steepe ways
As smoothe as glasse;
But these, all night,
Like candles, shed
Their beams ——"

VAUGHN.

AND so Miss Fielding intends leaving us to-day," said Kate, as she and Louise stood in the conservatory a day or two afterwards with Mrs. Doughty, admiring a beautiful azalea in full bloom. "How much she suffers! I do pity her so! I wish I could make her life happier; in temporal things, I mean. Oh dear! I wish I hadn't thought of something. I wonder if I ought? Of course you will say yes."

"Out with it," said Louise, laughing at Kate's look of blank dismay. "What shall I say 'yes' to?"

"Why, I hadn't told you, but several weeks ago mother wrote me that next month I had better invite one of you girls to spend some time with me at home; for she expected I would be lonesome and blue enough after this gay winter. Of course you know, — and there is the nicest note up-stairs ready to go to your mother in your next letter home, and now, — oh dear! something ——"

"Something said ask Miss Fielding instead," interrupted Louise, "and that something was my Kate's new heart."

"But wait a moment," said Kate; "I want mother to know you so much; and I am sure I *need* you to help me along a little farther, my dear light-on-a-hill; and I love you so dearly, are you sure, — do you think ——"

"That Miss Fielding's monotonous life will need the diversion far more than mine? Yes, I do; her ill health needs the benefit of the change, — her heart, your sympathy and affection. You can give her these, and love me still, dear Kittie."

"Yes, I do suppose so," said Kate, very

slowly, "and — but Mab will laugh, and it isn't just what I wanted; but it is what Christ wants, I do believe, and he knows when it costs us something, doesn't he, Lou?"

"Don't you think that is where Nettie's religion came short? It might have told me to make this sacrifice for another's happiness, but it didn't have any Saviour to help carry the burden. What help would it be to know a good man once lived — a 'lasting monument to mark how high the tides of divine life have risen in the human world'? I always remember that, because it sounds so prettily, to the head, I mean, or intellect; but our weak *hearts* like better the sound of this, — 'I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world,' and to know the Lord is our helper. I can not be thankful enough that Nettie no longer believes in that big-sounding, hollow religion;" and Kate leaned forward to make a large spray of fern fall over a pure japonica which old William had just added to his bouquet.

"Did Miss Fielding ever show you those

lines that she says comfort her most, next to the Bible?" asked Louise.

"You ought to hear her repeat them," she added, as Kate shook her head; "it makes them seem so really Christ's word *to her;* but I can give you a few lines: —

> 'Child of my love, *lean hard,*
> And let me feel the pressure of thy care.
> I know thy burden, child; I shaped it,
> Poised it in my own hand, made no proportion
> In its weight to thine unaided strength;
> For even as I laid it on I said,
> I shall be near, and, while she leans on Me,
> This burden shall be mine, not hers.'"

A tear fell from Kate's eye upon the petals of a delicate lily, and lay in its bosom like a dewdrop.

"Christ all and in all," said Louise, as they turned slowly back through the library.

At the door they met Uncle Paul, who had happened in to dinner with them. It was the first time they had seen him since Janet had been added to their little company of believers, and as they hurriedly told him the good news, what wonder the old man exclaimed, "The

Lord has done great things for us, whereof we are glad!" As they gathered around the table, very appropriate and heartfelt seemed each petition of the short, comprehensive giving of thanks.

Mrs. Doughty was the first to break the silence that followed. "They say Mr. Frank spoke in meeting last night."

Lawtie clapped his hands, dropping his knife on the housekeeper's immaculate apron, which did not increase her good-humor. Mrs. Thorne looked at Uncle Paul.

"It is true," he said. "You forestalled me with your own tidings of joy, or I should have told you before. How little we anticipated such a glad ending to this winter, when you and I talked it over together last October!"

"And how undeserved it has come to me!" she replied. "I should have planned so differently, could I have resisted your entreaties."

"And *I* did not accomplish just what I thought best, you remember," returned Uncle Paul; "but in the end how much greater work God may accomplish through these young

hearts he has won to himself! I only thought of clothing the poor; did not God foresee the clothing of these souls in the garments of salvation?"

"It makes me tremble to think how long my life may have hindered God's answer to my prayers for Frank," said Mrs. Thorne to Louise, as they went together into the library, the others having stopped at the door to see Uncle Paul off. "And how quickly we distrust his grace! Even now I am distressed about Frank's future influences. You know, better than I, what are Miss Howe's principles. Will she help or hinder him in this good way?"

Louise hesitated, and Mrs. Thorne half-absently continued, "Little as I interested myself in the matter of your invitations last fall, I was selfish in including *you* among my guests. Frank had spoken of you so frequently after that summer he spent in your place, I felt you must be a Christian, — I meant it should all happen differently," — she drew Louise to her and kissed her, — "but

when Miss Howe told mé of the little parsonage, whose occupant was so deeply interested in you, I tried to feel it was all for the best; and now, wherefore should I doubt? God has done so much for me!"

Louise looked at her in dumb surprise. Why could she not utter it? — that fact upon her lips, that the occupant of the parsonage was only a dear cousin, and never destined to bear any nearer relationship; not only because she thoroughly disapproved such marriages, but that she had never been able to reciprocate a tithe of cousin Harry's ardent affection, which for years, it was true, he had waited for her to accept. Percy knew all this. Why had she used only such facts as best served her own purposes? Louise felt her cheeks burn with indignation, but still she was silent. What could she say that would not seem indelicate after that intimation of Mrs. Thorne? And before she could determine what was best, the girls came in, and there was a half-hour of general conversation, after which, hearing Frank's voice in the hall, they consider-

ately withdrew, leaving the brother and sister alone with their new-born sympathy.

In her own room Louise struggled against vindictive thoughts of Percy, and tried to remember that a Father's loving hand was behind the human agency which had thus blotted out of her life so much brightness and joy. She recalled Percy's pale face, after that stormy night's ride, to drive away the thought that the latter cared only for Frank's wealth and position, — knew little of the noble nature and depth of feeling which Louise had learned to appreciate in that first acquaintance. Doubtless Percy loved him as much as such natures are capable of loving; and it did not tend to calmness to reflect how easily the prize — not of wealth but of heart — might have been her own. She had nothing more to do with that now, only to forget how ungenerously and treacherously it had been won from her. In prayer, at last, she quieted her angry passions; in prayer she grew content, and went forth to other duties with a cheerfulness of aspect that

never betrayed to the world the struggle or the victory.

"Freely ye have received," of limitless, priceless, forgiving love; "freely give," of love, weak in proportion, but similar in kind, to friends and enemies alike.

Once more that day had Louise occasion to remember and practice this.

It was in the evening, when Frank took her to ride, and told her so freely of his inner experience ever since that pleasant summer when his heart, softened by the recent death of his brother-in-law, had been attracted toward the right by the freshness and purity of her daily life. How afterwards, in a student's ambition, he had lost sight of the wisdom that is from above. How, for the second time, the truth had striven to strike its tendrils into his stony heart when he had closed the eyes of his traveling companion on the continent, and his heart had grown more callous in its very efforts of resistance. How business and society had completed the hardening process,

till, when again her life came under his observation, its unshrinking adherence to right only vexed and annoyed him; but now he could thank her for that steadfastness of purpose and resolve. To his conscience it had been a painful but salutary probe, and the little note on the evening of the fair had determined him to seek until he found the Friend of sinners. To her he ascribed his present happiness, and Louise, humbled and silent, lifted a grateful thought to Him who used his sinful child as an instrument, and had given her this instead of the earthly love she had so craved. If her life had driven Frank away from herself, but toward heaven, would not the knowledge of this compensate for a short lifetime unblessed with earthly affection?

They had been silent some time. Perhaps Frank's thoughts had wandered to his future as his sister's had done, for, as freely as he would have spoken to the latter, so did he talk with Louise about Percy. Could he hope to convince her of this purer, truer happiness? To persuade her to test it with him, to have her

heart purified in Jesus' blood, and desire only the indwelling of His Spirit? If he could, their united lives should be the Lord's, if not; — he hardly dared think of that, but it was not too late, and knowing the weakness and worldly inclination of his own heart, it would be better for their lives to lie apart.

It would not have been natural if Louise had not felt the power she held in her hands. Would it be more than lawful retribution upon Percy, more than just to herself, if she told all she knew of Percy's motives and intentions?

But then it was true that Percy had better thoughts of Christ and eternity, which only her excessive love of the world bade await a more convenient season. It was very possible that with Frank to lead the way, she would follow even to a final renouncing of self and the world; it might be the only means that would avail. Should selfishness and revenge direct her, or the love that "seeketh not her own?"

"Freely," was that not the way she had been forgiven?

She carefully told him of Percy's inordinate love of wealth and show and fashion; but how many times better feelings had struggled against it, and how very possible it seemed to her that if he dealt earnestly, prayerfully, patiently with her blinded heart, he might accomplish — God helping him — what he desired, and secure the lifelong happiness and the heavenly inheritance of both. She did not falter once, not even when he thanked her again, saying, as he helped her to alight, — "The minister whose sermons can not do more than somebody's life has, must not begrudge me a brother's share in your affection." She only said, "Percy will tell you more about the minister some day," and hurriedly left him.

We know, that, to give our story a proper ending as a story, the interview should not have concluded thus. Some friendly hand waiting behind the curtain should, at the most opportune moment, have revealed to Frank all the ambition and treachery of her to whom he wrote so tenderly and so earnestly that evening, and have opened the hidden

chamber of his own soul, where was silently fading quite away, as the proof sent you by the artist, a pictured countenance very different from Percy's bold regular features, with a clear gray eye in which he had once loved to read the purity of motive and strength of purpose hidden behind its gentle equipoise. But it was only a proof, and already grown so dim he was unconscious of its possession. Once, time and circumstances might have used the plate to produce a permanent copy, and have transferred it indelibly upon his heart and life. It was all past now, and, unlike stories, we must bid our heroine go on her own way alone. We know only that God's hand is behind the curtain of his providence, and in his most opportune time — it may not be until the cycles of eternity — he will reveal the secrets of all hearts, and permit us to "know even as we are known."

CHAPTER XVI.

SALT WITH SAVOR.

"Rich beyond dreams, the vantage-ground
Of life is gained; her hands have found
The talisman of old
That changes all to gold."

WHITTIER.

TWO years later the maple and oaks are scattering flakes of yellow and crimson around the old homestead known as "Farmer Fay's." Among their bared branches tiny birds' nests, cosily hidden all the summer, are becoming visible, and each bearing a look of loneliness as if the past was disconnecting itself wholly from the present. The very birds twittering under the eaves, or floating around the yard in low circles, seem like the occupants of old houses when they open cupboard doors and peer into capacious chimney-corners with swelling hearts and tearful eyes, because when

once more they step over the worn sill they have looked their last on those familiar places.

There is a human heart learning sweet lessons of usefulness and contentment within the old farmhouse. We may hear a busy step here and there, from kitchen to cellar, and anon to the airy bedroom where the old farmer lies a helpless invalid, for the months or years remaining for him this side of the grave.

They are too active for the feeble mother's. She is sitting in the accustomed corner, counting wearily the steps she can not lessen, and watching eagerly for the bright smile, sure to be hers whenever Louise passes the door on her round of evening duties. The furniture of the room is plain and simple, and there are grasses on the mantel, of every variety found by the summer breeze in valley or on upland, intermingled with bearded grains and pale immortelles. Wreaths of the bright autumn leaves adorn the pictures, and upon the table is a dish of mosses, in their quaker garb of brown and gray.

"Louise, darling, — that problem which

troubled you once, 'how to be in the world and not of it', — are you content that God shall answer it thus, by withdrawing you, as it were, from society, mirth, love, and setting your feet in this weary, circumscribed round of duty?"

"Content, dear mother? what else should be a daughter's heart, — where else a daughter's place, blessed with such parents as mine? I am growing happier every day, my own mother."

She spoke truly, for in other than outward life God helps them who help themselves. Yet the temptations had not been few to indulge in vain retrospections and selfish longings since her return to the lonely farmhouse, after that brief taste of the world's attractions, wealth, ease, and gayety. Perhaps the remembrance of this made her resume: —

"I used to think, dear mother, that I should be strong and careful enough to enjoy all the good things of this life, and yet resist the accompanying temptations. I didn't like to hear Paul say, 'But thou, O man of God, flee these things;' and good Hannah More remark,

'If the Christian course had been meant for a path of roses, would the life of the Author of Christianity have been a path strewed with thorns!' And yet I ever felt the life my heart pictured as most desirable could hardly dwell under God's beatitude, for it would not foster a spirit of meekness; and so my problem came to trouble me, how, if I should be in the world I need not become of it. But, mother, perhaps God knew my weakness better than I, and spared me a longer test, and I think — yes, I *am* content."

"I understand," was the mother's reply, "and it comforts me to think that God, who knows the end from the beginning, has ordered this life for you so different from what I would have had it. Yes, dear child, — and the mother's voice grew tremulous, — "even if there is one thing dearer than any other which he has taken from you, be sure he has not done it in vain; but do not cover the secret grave too deeply, and try to forget it is there. If he would have us say at the burial-place of friends, 'He doeth all things well,' surely he

desires no less submission when in our hearts he leaves a buried hope: and unless we let the sunlight of his presence hallow the place, it will darken our whole lives."

Louise leaned over her mother, and returned her look of yearning, sympathizing love with one equally eloquent in grateful affection. There was no need of words. She knew a mother's heart had read her hidden sorrow, and felt that half its bitterness had already vanished.

That evening, when, as usual, her parents had retired early and Louise sat alone, Percy came in. She had just returned from Janet's wedding, to which both had been invited, but from which Louise had been detained by the inopportune illness of her faithful kitchen-girl.

Percy was very enthusiastic in her description of the affair, the variety and splendor of the presents, the elegance of the new abode, the beauty of the bride, the dignity of the bridegroom, and the dizzy hights of fashionable caste, to which Percy herself had been lifted as Frank's fiancee.

Louise could understand the feeling that prompted the concluding "Oh dear! it's so dreadfully dull to settle back on these old farms after so much delicious excitement;" but she was grieved and disappointed when Percy proceeded to contrast the simplicity of the bridal wardrobe with her own anticipated selection, and expatiated on the elegance of dress and abode with which the future Mrs. Knowlton should eclipse all who had previously led the beau monde of R——. Was this the end of all her sacrifice? Her thoughts ran rapidly back over the time they had spent at Mrs. Thorne's two years ago, recalling each minute event, bringing to herself and Percy such different destinies, since the day Uncle Paul met them in the railroad station. That, or perhaps a desire to change the subject, suggested her sudden question.

"What was on your card from Uncle Paul, Percy? You never showed it to us, leaving us suddenly, you remember."

The crust of worldliness and self-love had not become impenetrable; under it still were

truer, better, tenderer feelings. Percy covered her face with both hands.

"Don't ask me, Lou; don't mention it. I know it can't be; the Bible does not say whoever gains the whole world *must* lose his soul; it does not say that does it?"

"What do you mean by the whole world?"

"Why, every thing our hearts naturally desire: wealth, and all it gives."

"If we obtain all our hearts wish for, we must certainly lose our souls, Percy, for our hearts are full of wrong lusts and desires; we can not serve them and God."

"It seems as if I could, Lou, let me once have money enough not to be worried to death over odds and ends. Only let me walk up the broad aisle of St. —— Church, knowing I am the best-dressed lady in the house, and I am ready to be as good as you please."

"But can't you see, Percy, that such goodness would only last till you espied a finer velvet cloak than your own? We must be content with such things as we have. It is contentment with godliness that is great gain."

"But these worldly things," said Percy, "I don't believe you know what it is to crave them. I do, and feel that if you make religion all, they must be given up. You always seem just so. I wonder sometimes if you ever want any thing you can't have."

Louise did not answer.

"Did you know Mr. Vose was to be married this fall?" asked Percy, after a little silence, and scrutinizing Louise under her eyelashes.

"Yes, Kate wrote me. To Miss Bell's sister, isn't he? You know they were engaged that winter we were in R——. She came home the week before we left. I liked her better than Miss Fanny."

"Mr. Vose was rather agreeable?" said Percy, interrogatively.

"Very, for a half hour's chat; but if you went any deeper, there wasn't anything there."

Percy sighed. Evidently she had not found the comfort hoped for, and with a seeming effort she exclaimed, — "I believe that is my trouble. There is nothing of me. Nothing

good, I mean. Nothing but selfishness and meanness. I begin to see that much, especially since Frank has changed; and I can't be sorry he has, although I was so vexed at first, he is so good and earnest. Oh, why can not I be a Christian, too!"

"Jesus said, — 'If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink.'"

"But that 'coming' implies a great deal. You know there is such a thing as selling one's spiritual birthright for a mess of pottage. I ought to hate the world, for it has made me do what once I would have scorned the thought of. Sometimes I wonder if God can blot out even such scarlet sins as mine. But, Louise, do you think that before one can truly repent and begin a new life, she must confess every hidden sin?"

She sat looking through the window, out into the darkness, while she waited for an answer.

Louise had divined her meaning, and was struggling with her own proud heart. God was not permitting her sacrifice to be in vain.

Should she refuse to remove this last barrier from the way of a sinful soul seeking for rest?

"I think not, necessarily," she said, at length, "if we tell Jesus all."

"But that doesn't take the burden away; there is something more," said the other wearily, "and I can't, — there's no use trying."

Once more duty was plain to Louise.

"If any thing troubles you, dear Percy, that I can remove, if — if you have ever somewhat misrepresented certain things to — to any one, it is all quite forgiven, I assure you. Do not be alarmed; no one knows it but myself. It was by a mere accident that I first overheard it, and we will never mention it again."

Percy rose from her chair and stood facing Louise as if suddenly stricken dumb; and then, as suddenly sinking back to her seat, she bowed her head on the table.

It was very still, save the chirping of the cricket under the window, and the ticking of the old kitchen clock.

And Louise? Ah! however wearisome the coming hours of her future life, there will ever

be the remembrance of that glad moment when Percy lifted her bowed head to say in a low tone, "I never knew half it meant to be a Christian, before. *This* is the love that overcomes the world. It has taken away what my pride would not surmount. But, oh! I am too vile to hope for acceptance; there was no place of repentance for Esau, though he sought it carefully with tears."

"No way of undoing what he had done, dear Percy, of regaining the earthly good he had forfeited; but Christ never turns away a truly repentant sinner from his mercy-seat. If we forgive one another, Percy, have we less hope from Christ's love?"

"I know; *you* forgave me, but it can't be you know all; and I can never look *you* in the face again, — how dare I look up to God?"

"The 'publican would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven,'" repeated Louise, gently, "but he said, 'God be merciful to me a sinner,' 'and went down to his house justified.'"

Percy walked hurriedly to the door. "*You*

are a Christian, Louise; but I, — what am I? I must be alone, — I will see you to-morrow. Good-night."

She passed down the walk, but turning back for a moment to the steps where Louise stood watching her, said, in a hoarse whisper, "Will you, oh, *can* you pray for me?" And Louise to her earnest "I have always done that, Percy," added a warm, fond kiss, — the first time their lips had met since the morning she was an unseen listener of the conversation in Mrs. Thorne's hall.

Was it not the seal of her sacrifice?

With the warm glow of self-forgetful love in her heart, Louise, once more alone, opened her writing-desk, where lay an unfinished letter to Kate, and resumed the sentence broken off by Percy's entrance.

"You need not apologize, dear Kate, for telling me of all your nice treats, musical, intellectual, social, and the like, because of their contrast to my necessarily retired life. I am sure no ignoring of forbidden things can make self-denial easier: it is only a constant recog-

nition of the Father's loving hand guiding us into paths best fitted to lead us safely to himself. But would it be 'letting your left hand know,' Kittie dear, if you should tell me a little more of the mission-school, and the long walks, of which Nettie writes me thus, — 'Our Kate has become a brighter sunlight than poor Bridget Hale used to fancy her, in many a more desolate home than hers.'

"Your cheery message to father has made him impatient to make your acquaintance; and I am longing for your visit in the spring. I want so much to talk with you of Miss Fielding. Six weeks to-day since she went home to heaven! Her little Bible lies beside me as I write; and between its leaves, the card from Uncle Paul, bearing its comforting words to her and to us, — 'Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; and being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all those that obey him.'

'Oh, happy he with all his loss
Whom God hath set beneath the cross.'

"I never felt that truth so forcibly as during my last visit to her, when I listened to her rich experience of God's sustaining grace and helping presence for the nine months she had not left her bed. She rejoiced so sincerely, too, when I told her of Janet's present happiness. I felt only religion could have enabled her to do that so heartily. Once life held equal hopes for herself; and oh, Kate, isn't it the hardest thing we ever strive to do, to feel glad to see others enjoying the blessings denied to us? But perhaps other Christians can uproot more thoroughly their innate selfishness, and do not expect, as I do, always to struggle against it, till Christ, who is able to keep us from falling, shall present us faultless in our home above.

"The visit from Mrs. Thorne and Lawtie gave us all much pleasure. What a fine manly boy our pet is becoming, and happy and trustful as ever! Indeed, he hardly seems to know a shade of sorrow, now that his mother has grown so young in her sympathy with him and their suffering fellow-mortals. Would the world had more of such, who hold their largess

of means and opportunity as stewards of Him who came to earth not to be ministered unto, but to minister!

"Uncle Paul and wife gave me a short call on their way south. May the permanent change of climate bring health to her as surely as they will carry happiness to those among whom they make their home.

"So Charlie has gone west? He will carry there a generous heart, a manly integrity, a Christian influence, and by and by, although you forgot to mention it, Kitty, as dear and loving a wife as ever learned to bear 'pin-pricks.'

"Your question concerning Percy reminds me of the one you asked her so long ago, — "Are you one of the religious ones?' You remember she made no reply. Neither will I now, dear Kate, but when you come to us in the spring, I trust you will read for yourself a plain affirmative answer."

And so it was that when the spring buds were bursting their winter cerements, and Louise and Kate stood together on the farm-

house steps watching Percy go slowly down the lane toward her own home, Kate said,— "I have read my own answer, Lou, darling. Never was one more changed than Percy Howe, not even my queenly Janet. She seems more than humble, thoroughly self-abased. I know it can only be the Lord's doings, dear Lou, but under him, Percy, as well as all of us, must owe very, very much to you, — the dearest light-on-a-candlestick"——

Louise would fain have hindered her saying more, but Kate, shaking down showers of fragrance and bloom from the old apple-tree persisted in adding, very much in earnest, but half-sportively, like the Kate of old, — "Ah, but it would never have happened to any of us, had you not so thoroughly 'salted' us with your religion, when we were MRS. THORNE'S GUESTS."

THE END.

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